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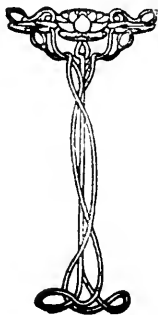


SERIES XVI

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THE ANTE-BELLUM SOUTHERN COMMERCIAL CONVENTIONS

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

The essay herein published was begun at the Summer School of Trinity College (now Duke University) during the session of 1924, under the direction of Professor Arthur H. Hirsch of Ohio Wesleyan University, at that time Lecturer in History in the Summer School. It has been completed since the author was appointed Instructor in History in Columbia University. Prior thereto Mr. Van Deusen received the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from the Ohio State University in the years 1913 and 1914, respectively. From 1914 to 1925 he taught in the High Schools of Celina, Fostoria, and Toledo, Ohio.

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For Committee on Publication.

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INTRODUCTION

The period from 1820 to 1860 was one of intense sectional rivalry. Politically, this rivalry was evidenced by the desire of the South to annex more territory in order to gain additional slave states. This political contest is marked by such events as the Missouri Compromise, the annexation of Texas followed by the Mexican War and the acquisition of California, the Compromise of 1850, the attempt to secure Cuba, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and the Dred Scott decision. It finally culminated in the election of a President on a platform of non-extension of slavery, which precipitated the Civil War. Side by side with this political rivalry was an economic contest which, in point of importance, is scarcely inferior to the political contest.

In the colonial period the South was largely agricultural, and even in the middle and northern sections agriculture predominated. But the sterile soil of New England was not well suited for agriculture, while its forests did furnish considerable quantities of timber. It was because of natural causes that New England turned to shipbuilding and commerce. The Embargo and the War of 1812 resulted in the temporary stopping of that trade and led New England to utilize her water power. It was in this way that extensive cotton manufactures came into existence in America. With the conclusion of peace English merchants attempted to flood American markets with their products in an endeavor to stifle these manufactures while still in their infancy. It was this situation that paved the way for the Tariff of 1816—the first real protective tariff in our history. The record shows that the southern members of Congress voted with the North on the tariff question in the hope that the protection thus secured would be of assistance in promoting southern manufactures.

But the southern system of labor was not suited for manufactures. The South continued to be an agricultural region. The North, on the other hand, tended more and more toward manufacturing and commerce. Commerce and manufactures cause a concentration of population, while agriculture tends to

scatter it. Thus the northern cities developed with an amazing rapidity, while those of the South remained comparatively stationary. The constant demand for labor in the factories induced European immigrants to go to the North, while the institution of slavery in the South repelled them; and this still further increased the disparity in numbers between the two sections. This increase in population showed itself in a striking manner in the ascendancy of the North in the national House of Representatives—a power which the South saw no means of counteracting save by retaining control of the Senate, and hence the demand for slave territory.

Down to this time American commerce with Europe had been carried on in northern ships. Through this medium southern cotton exported abroad was shipped. These ships returned to the North laden with European goods and, after paying the tariff, landed them at northern ports.¹ From these ports they were reshipped to the South where they were resold with the added cost of tariff, transportation charges, and northern profits.² The profits of the northern shippers on southern commerce were commonly believed in the South to be the cause of northern prosperity and of southern impoverishment. The address issued by the second Augusta convention of 1838 estimated the duties paid by the South since 1787 at \$630,000,000. It then continued:

If we suppose the value of the goods upon which the \$630,000,000 of duties were levied to have been but four times the value of the duties, it amounted to \$2,500,000,000. How were these goods brought to this country and distributed? The northern merchant has come hither and bought from the southern planter of equal value, abating from the price all the expenses, direct and incidental, or transportation. He has insured them in northern offices, and shipped them abroad in his own vessels—exchanged them at a small profit for foreign merchandise—brought it home—paid one-fourth its value to the government—added that amount and all the expenses of importation, and 15 to 20% for his profits to the price, and

¹ "Report to the Charleston Convention," 1839, by Geo. McDuffie, Robert Y. Hayne, and F. Elmore; *The Industrial Resources of the South and West*, III. 92-116, quoted by William Watson Davis, "Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions" (*Alabama Historical Society Transactions*, Montgomery, 1904, V. 154).

² The subject is discussed in the "Address of the Augusta Convention (1838) to the People of the South," *DeBow's Review*, November 1852, 477-493.

exposed it for sale. The southern merchant has now gone to him—lingered the summer through at heavy expense—bought a portion of the goods, reshipped them in northern vessels to southern ports—added 25% more to the price, to cover his expenses and profits—and sold them to the southern planter. All the disbursements made in this process, save such as are made abroad, are among northern men . . . Every item in the endless catalogue of charges, except the government dues, may be considered a voluntary tribute from the citizens of the South to their brethren of the North; for they would all have gone to our own people, had we done our own exporting and importing.³

Robert Y. Hayne⁴ and George McDuffie estimated that this "voluntary tribute" amounted to \$10,000,000 annually.⁵ This was the situation which a large number of southern men wished to correct and to it must be attributed the inception of the southern commercial conventions.

The first four conventions (1837-1839) had for their sole aim the establishment of direct trade with Europe, although one of them (Charleston, 1839) mentioned the matter of internal improvements. The next three conventions (1845, 1849, 1851) were concerned wholly with internal improvements. The Memphis Convention of 1845 wished to bind the Atlantic Coast to the Mississippi Valley, to clear the mouth of the Mississippi, and then bind the West to the South. The Memphis Convention of 1849 was called for the sole purpose of furthering the construction of the Pacific Railroad, although a canal or railroad across Mexico or Central America was a measure of temporary interest. The New Orleans Convention of 1851 was interested in railroad construction, both east and west of the Mississippi, and the Isthmian route.

From 1852 to 1859 the aims of the conventions were more numerous and complex. The committee which called the convention at Baltimore (1852) stated its purpose as follows:

The establishment of a continental depot of cotton in opposition to Liverpool;

³ *DeBow's Review*, XIII. 483-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. 339.

⁵ "Report to the first Augusta Convention," *Charleston Courier*, October 24, 1837.

The direct exportation of cotton by the planter, thus doing away with middle men, middle warehouses, middle commissions, middle insurances, and all the interminable medium which eats up our substance and concentrates our exports at Liverpool;

To build up a Southern importing market in opposition to New York;

To establish, through railroad alliance, more sympathy with the great West and Northwest, socially, commercially, and nationally;

To have one or more lines of steamers to Europe;

To induce immigrants through our Southern ports, to pass to the West by a communication always open, expeditious and cheap, or to settle on our own fertile lands;

To stimulate manufactures and general industry;

To educate our children at home; to spend our wealth at home;

To aim at commercial and industrial independence.⁶

When Senator William C. Dawson took the chair at the Memphis Convention in 1853, he stated the subjects which he thought proper to come before that body. Among them he enumerated agriculture, commerce, manufactures, transportation facilities, development of seaports, direct trade, steamship lines to Europe and South America, improvement of rivers and harbors, and the Pacific Railroad.⁷

Several attempts were made to define the objects of the Charleston Convention of 1854. Mr. Dawson, once more presiding officer, spoke specifically of "direct importation and exportation, the Pacific Railroad, the Tehuantepec Route, commercial connections with South America, mail communication with foreign countries, education at home, manufactories in the South, improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi River, and its embankment so as to reclaim the extent of swamp lands on its border for cultivation."⁸

J. D. B. DeBow was not present at this convention, but he sent a letter stating his understanding of its purpose. He mentioned "deepening of the Passes at the Mouth of the Mississippi, the reduction for a period of time, or the entire

⁶ *Charleston Courier*, June 4, 1853.

⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 259-61.

⁸ *Washington Sentinel*, April 15, 1854.

abrogation, of duties on railroad iron, and the adoption of the policy by the federal government (by the cession of alternate sections, advocated at one time by Mr. Calhoun) of returning to railroad companies a portion, if not the whole, of the additional value imparted by them to the public domain which they intersect, upon the same principle that private landowners voluntarily tax themselves."⁹

Mr. T. A. Marshall of Mississippi submitted this resolution :

"*Resolved*, That it is the deliberate sense of this Convention, that the object for which we are convened is the general development and maintenance of the rights and resources of the Southern and Southwestern States; and while we regard Commerce as the great colonizer, civilizer, and christianizer of mankind, which with its various carrying interests, demands our special consideration, we also recognize as our legitimate business, all other matters of a practical character, tending to the accomplishment of the general design; embracing Education, Agriculture, Home Manufactures, Navigation, and the occupation of our vast uncultivated regions."¹⁰

General M. B. Lamar, the chairman of the New Orleans Convention of 1855, refrained from enumerating definitely the purposes of the convention, stating merely that they were familiar to all. He did call especial attention, however, to the Pacific Railroad; and as the resolutions adopted dealt with that subject, direct trade, the Tehuantepec Route, the deepening of harbors, education, and the abolition of duties on railroad iron, we may safely conclude that these constituted the objects of this gathering.

In the Richmond assemblage of 1856, DeBow brought in a resolution :

"That the objects of this Convention, as developed at its several sittings in Memphis, Charleston, and New Orleans, being to secure to the Southern States the utmost amount of prosperity as an integral part of the Federal Union, or to enable them to vindicate and maintain their rights and institutions whether that Union shall subsist or not, are all matters pertinent and cognizable which relate to the development of our soil—the enlargement of our internal improvement system, our domestic

⁹ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

trade and direct foreign commerce; mines, manufactures and the arts—the social system and institutions of the South—our schools, colleges, and press. . . .”¹¹

The call of the committee to the Savannah Convention of 1856 repeated the identical words of DeBow’s resolution.¹²

In the Knoxville Convention (1857) DeBow, as presiding officer, did not state the aims of the assemblage. But if we assume that the resolutions passed represent those aims, we have such policies as the reopening of the slave trade,¹³ establishment of steamship lines to Europe,¹⁴ fortification and improvement of southern harbors, and education of a southern type.¹⁵

The call of the committee to the Montgomery Convention of 1858 states six propositions:

1. The question of master and slave, involving the physical and religious improvement of the slave; the subject of slave laws and policies; the reclamation of slave property stolen away by fraud or force; and the modes of retaliatory legislation;

2. The question of the supply of labor at the South, in its relation to the production and consumption of Southern commodities, to the free blacks, to the African fleet, and to the action of England and France in the introduction of coolies and apprentices;

3. The effect of the tariff, banking, bounty, and navigation system upon the South and the reciprocal interests to the planter and merchant;

4. The development of Southern agriculture, a proper enlargement of manufactures and commerce, the establishment of a system of internal improvement, and the subject of ocean steamers and marts;

5. The resources and self-sustaining capabilities of the slaveholding states, and the establishment and independence of their literary and educational systems;

6. The political relations of the South under the Federal Constitution, and the foreign policy to be supported; the maintenance and extension of her institutions within the limits of the Union, and beyond them, and her means of defense and security from aggression, present and prospective.¹⁶

¹¹ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 344.

¹² *Ibid.*, XXI. 551.

¹³ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 309-10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 291-300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 291-300.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 466-7.

In his address to the Vicksburg Convention, General Charles Clark states: "They (the conventions) had, primarily, for their object the interest of commercial independence of the South. That, however, did not constitute them a mere Chamber of Commerce, to consider purely and abstractly commercial relations. They were here as Southern men, not merely as commercial men, but as agriculturalists. The commerce of the South is bound to control the commercial interests of the world, which is founded on the great agricultural interest itself, the key and guard of the world's safety and prosperity. This necessarily opened up a wide field for discussion. The question of commerce opened up the vast field of political discussion as to the propriety and impropriety of benefit being given by the General Government. The question of internal improvements raised the question of the power of the General Government, or of the duty of the States, or individuals, to contribute to the advancement of internal improvements. And agriculture opened up the grand question whether that is to be stationary, or whether other aids in the way of additional laborers are not to be brought to bear upon it."¹⁷

Reduced to their lowest terms, all these aims embraced a two-fold program: improvement of commercial conditions at home, and extension of commercial relations abroad. "Improvement of commercial conditions at home" meant: (1) improvement of transportation facilities—construction of railroads and canals, clearing of rivers for navigation, harbor improvement and fortification; (2) development of manufactures and mining; (3) development of agriculture, including the importation of field hands (reopening of the slave trade) and construction of levees on the Mississippi; and (4) literary and educational independence. "Extension of commercial relations abroad" meant: (1) direct trade with Europe and South America, including improved mail communication with foreign countries (such as Dudley Mann's steam ferry scheme, Rainey's packet boats, and Maury's Amazon schemes); (2) reduction of the tariff; and (3) construction of the Pacific Railroad and Isthmian Canal by which it was proposed to connect the South with the Pacific.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 94.

This program was nothing more nor less than an extension of the philosophy of the Cotton Kingdom. No series of facts or arguments could be compiled which would better show that the thought of the economic world in the South in that day revolved about the cotton plant. The successful accomplishment of this program meant the commercial acquisition of the Mississippi Valley by the South, the extension of southern institutions to the West, southern control of European commerce with America, and southern possession of the Oriental trade of the world. Failing in the accomplishment of this stupendous undertaking, the Vicksburg Convention of 1859 was ready for disunion. The development of these aims and objectives is the task of this essay.

I

THE DIRECT TRADE CONVENTIONS

As early as 1835 there was a convention of merchants at Knoxville, Tennessee, at which the commercial condition of the South was discussed.¹ Other local meetings were held at different places, and at length a number of these local groups came together at Augusta, Georgia. Several citizens of Athens, one of them William Dearing, issued the call for this convention.² The panic of 1837 had thrown the financial system of the country into chaos. The South had not been affected to as great a degree as the other sections of the country³ and the call stated that the crisis in the commercial affairs of the South and Southwest was "the most favorable that had occurred since the formation of the American government to attempt a new organization of our commercial relations with Europe."⁴

The convention opened on October 18, 1837. Only two states were represented, South Carolina with thirteen delegates, Georgia with sixty-five. Honorable Kerr Boyce of Charleston was chosen president.⁵ The chief work of the convention was the formulation of a series of resolutions, the first

¹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 157, quoting the *Georgia Messenger*, 1836-1837.

² Robert Royal Russel, "Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1861" (*Illinois University Studies*, Urbana, Ill., 1923, XI. 17) quoting *Niles Register*, LV. 43, 189.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16, quoting *Charleston Courier*, October 7, 1837.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17, quoting *Charleston Courier*, August 14, 1837.

⁵ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 158, quoting *Georgia Messenger*, October 26, 1837.

second, fourth, fifth, and sixth of which dealt with the subject of direct trade in order that the South might throw off "the degrading shackles of our commercial independence."⁶ The convention desired to increase the capital invested in southern shipping and to induce people to show a preference for southern importers "when the terms are equal." It was the sense of the convention that individual merchants did not possess the capital required to establish direct trade, and for that reason the legislatures were urged to legalize "limited co-partnerships." The opinion was also expressed that there was an overproduction of cotton and that planters could profitably invest their surplus in other ways than in land and negroes. If they would apply one-half of their net income to commerce for a few years, abundant capital would be supplied for foreign trade.⁷ George McDuffie was made chairman of a committee to address the people of the southern and southwestern states.⁸

In accordance with the seventh resolution, the convention reassembled at Augusta on the first of April, 1838.⁹ The field of representation was larger, delegates being present from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Thomas Butler King of Georgia was president, while Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina was the chairman of a committee of twenty-one which reported a series of resolutions. The second of these declared that the dependence of the South was caused by "the unequal action of the Federal Government or the abstraction of our people toward other pursuits." To remedy this situation it was proposed to deal with the financial facilities of the South. A banking system like that existing in the North was essential, and these banks should invest a portion of their capital abroad, purchasing foreign exchange and so procuring credits and funds in Europe. Such a banking system should perform three functions: (1) form foreign connections, (2) organize facilities at home, and

⁶ On the subject of direct trade see a series of articles in *DeBow's Review*, October, November, and December, 1847.

⁷ *DeBow's Review*, IV. 222; Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 26, quoting *Savannah Daily Republican*, October 24, 1837.

⁸ For the address, see *DeBow's Review*, IV. 208 ff.

⁹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 160, quoting *Georgia Messenger*, April 12, 1838.

(3) identify the southern merchant with a credit system.¹⁰ An appeal was made to southern capitalists to invest their money under the limited co-partnerships "lately passed" by Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and Virginia.¹¹ The Augusta Convention of 1837 had evidently borne fruit.

Another suggestion thrown out by this convention was the establishment of agencies for foreign and domestic manufactures in southern cities, but the evidence seems to indicate that such agencies were not established. The convention adjourned after providing for an address to the people of the South and West,¹² for the appointment of a "Committee of Correspondence," and calling a third convention to meet in Augusta the third Monday in October, 1838.¹³

In the meantime, another direct trade convention met in Richmond during June, 1838, and still another at Norfolk in November of that year. Both these conventions were composed largely of Virginia delegates, although several sons of North Carolina were present. These assemblages, like the two conventions at Augusta, were bi-partisan, but they do not seem to have succeeded quite so ably in keeping out of politics. Among the members of these conventions were John S. Millson, J. M. Botts, James Caskie, Francis Mallory, Edmund Ruffin, Myer Myers, and W. C. Flournoy.¹⁴ The committee on commerce of the Richmond Convention made an able report,¹⁵ and another report prepared and submitted by Francis Mallory was withdrawn because of opposition.¹⁶ Ex-president John Tyler presided over the convention at Norfolk,¹⁷ and the report of its general committee was read by John S. Millson.¹⁸

¹⁰ The importance attached to this portion of the resolution may be gathered from the following quotation from the *Savannah Daily Republican*, April 10, 1838: "It is not to be concealed that without the aid and support of the banks, the difficulties in our way will be greatly multiplied. It will depend on them, in great measure, to determine the fate of our great measure." Quoted by Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹¹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹² By A. B. Longstreet. The "Address" is published in the *Charleston Mercury*, August 11, 1838; *DeBow's Review*, XIII. 477-493; *Niles Register*, LV. 40 ff.

¹³ Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3, quoting *Georgia Messenger*, April 12, 1838.

¹⁴ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*, June 22, 1838.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*, June 26, 1838.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*, November 30, 1838.

The third Augusta Convention met October 15, 1838. One hundred and forty delegates were present from the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Among those present were Colonel A. J. Pickett of Alabama and George McDuffie and Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina. Colonel James Gadsden of Florida was elected president.¹⁹ The resolutions of this convention treated of the following subjects:

(1) Formation of trading associations by members of the convention;

(2) Connection of the middle West with the southern seaboard by canal and railroad;

(3) Harmony and coöperation in all works of internal improvement;

(4) Extending of every legitimate aid by southern banks to the incipient works of internal improvement;

(5) Recommendation to southern legislatures of an inquiry concerning the amount of banking capital in the South;

(6) Formation of direct connections by southern banks with like European institutions;

(7) Adjournment to meet in Charleston, S. C., the third Monday of April, 1839.²⁰

The only new features in these resolutions are the third and fifth; all passed with but little debate, except the fourth. As first presented it read, "to invest surplus capital in railroad companies;" but after a lengthy debate it was changed to read "works of internal improvement." A spirit of disinterestedness prevailed all the proceedings.²¹

The Charleston Convention met on April 15, 1839. Two hundred and nineteen delegates representing the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee were present.²² Asbury Hull of Georgia was chosen president.²³ The chief topic before this convention was the question of direct trade with Europe. A report on the subject

¹⁹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 163, quoting *Georgia Messenger*, October, 1838.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163-4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 165, quoting *Alabama Journal*, Montgomery, April 24, 1839.

was read by Robert Y. Hayne and adopted.²⁴ "The evil complained of," says the report, "is that the Southern and South-western States, while producing near three-fourths of the domestic exports of the Union, import scarcely one-tenth of the merchandise received in exchange for them. The foreign commerce, which derives its existence from the productions of our industry, and which is the unfailing source of so much wealth to others, is carried on by the citizens of other states, causing their cities to flourish, while ours have fallen into decay. The profits of the *agency* by which this trade has been carried on *for us*, has been estimated at ten millions of dollars annually. . . . No one acquainted with the present course of trade and the usual measure of mercantile profits, would, we presume, estimate the gains of the northern merchants from the almost exclusive possession of the carrying trade for the South, at less than from ten to fifteen per cent."²⁵ The payment of the national debt of \$420,000,000 and the reduction of the tariff according to the terms of the compromise act of 1833, had, it said, removed the causes of southern dependence.²⁶ There were, however, three causes for the depression of southern trade which still existed, and which would have to be removed before southern success would be complete:

"The first is the want of a commercial capital adequate to the great demands of a direct export or import trade;

"The second, the want of a sufficient demand, in our own ports, for the goods which, in the event of the establishment of such a trade, would be received at these ports;

"Third, the want of lines of packets and steamships running at stated periods between our own ports and those of Europe."²⁷

To remedy the first evil Hayne urged southern capitalists to invest more freely in commerce. Planters were advised to put their surplus capital into commerce instead of slaves and land.²⁸ Southern banks were urged to extend financial aid to

²⁴ *DeBow's Review*, IV. 339-356; *DeBow's Industrial Resources of the South and West*, III. 92-111.

²⁵ Hayne's report, *DeBow's Review*, IV. 339.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

²⁸ "A portion of the capital now engaged in agriculture, should be invested in commercial pursuits. . . . All that we would propose is, that they should set

those engaged in commercial pursuits.²⁹ The solicitation of foreign capital in southern enterprises was advocated. To remove the second cause of depression, southern legislatures were urged to extend their systems of internal improvements, for it was evident that a trans-oceanic line to Charleston or any other southern city must be valueless without the railroads to convey the articles of commerce into the interior. Southern merchants were also urged to establish regular lines of packet-ships between southern ports and the ports of Europe. "With these facilities our merchants would be enabled to enter into fair competition with the merchants of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. . . . It is chiefly by the formation of companies and co-partnerships, composed of American and British houses, that success in this object is to be secured."³⁰

The convention also advised the South to make provision for the commercial education of its youth. It called for support of the *Southern Review*, a periodical devoted to the interests of the South which had been recently established. It passed a resolution recommending that southern legislatures exempt commercial capital from all taxes except those on interest and profits.³¹ A committee of five from each state was appointed to carry out these measures. On April 17, after a three day session, the convention adjourned, and for six years no other commercial convention met. A writer in *DeBow's Review* says: "We turned over their pages with great

apart a portion of their annual surplus, and invest it in commerce. To enable them to do this without risk to themselves, the Legislatures of several States have, at the instance of the Convention, authorized the formation of limited co-partnerships, by which means the opportunity is afforded to every one, of investing such portion of his capital . . . without incurring a risk of losing . . . more than the amount so invested. . . . If every planter in our country would invest only the tenth part of a single crop in this way, the deficiency in our commercial capital would at once be supplied." *Ibid.*, 350.

²⁹ "Under a recommendation made by a former convention, some of our banks have established credits in Europe, the use of which has, to a considerable extent, been given to the direct importer on the most liberal terms. . . . But the furnishing of credits in Europe is not sufficient; the banks must likewise enable the importer to realize the price of his goods sold on credit to the country merchant, in time to meet his engagements to those institutions." This could only be effected by freely discounting the paper received for those goods "whether the same shall have more or less than six months to run." The "coöperation of the country banks in collecting and remitting the proceeds of such paper to the banks of the sea-coast, will be extremely desirable. . . . We are satisfied, that if all of the banks in our southern and southwestern importing cities would agree to lend themselves to this object, so far as they could with a due respect to their own safety, the aid thus received would go very far indeed to advance the direct trade." *Ibid.*, pp. 351-2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

³¹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 165, quoting *Charleston Courier*, April 19, 1839.

interest and marvelled that a movement begun in such a spirit and prosecuted for a time with so much vigor, could have at last been suffered to die away, and pass, as it were, from the memory."³²

The Charleston Convention marked the end of the first period of the attempt of the South to secure commercial independence. All of the conventions of this period, with the possible exception of the third held at Augusta, agreed on the benefits of direct trade. The southern states were declared to be in a "state of commercial dependence, scarcely less reproachful to their industry and enterprise than it is incompatible with their substantial prosperity."³³ There was the startling fact that the South furnished two-thirds of the exports of the United States and received only one-tenth of the imports directly. Francis Mallory estimated that five-sevenths of the southern imports came into the South by the way of the North.³⁴ Because of this trade "the one people has risen like the rocket, and the other has fallen like its stick—their positions must have been reversed, if the southern people had maintained their foreign trade."³⁵

The address calling the second Augusta Convention asserted that with direct trade "there would be an end to the unequal barter of which we have spoken. The doleful cry for northern funds would be hushed. The speculators upon southern distress would cease. The disorders of the currency would be healed. The relation of the commercial agency would be changed. They would be acquaintances and friends, identical in feeling and interest; enjoying mutual confidence, and interchanging mutual favors. . . . The fountain and the streams of commerce lying all within our land, would enrich it to an extent that none can foresee. Our works of internal improvement would receive a new and ever-accelerating impetus. Our drooping cities would be revived—our creeping commerce winged; and all the blessings, physical, moral and intellectual, which invariably accompany affluence and inde-

³² *DeBow's Review*, III. 558.

³³ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21, quoting *Niles Register*, LV. 42.

pendence, would be ours."³⁶ As Mr. Davis has pointed out,³⁷ during this period the conventions sought to promote direct trade in three ways: (1) by lessening the cost of getting agricultural products of the South to the seaboard, (2) by increasing southern capital in southern commerce and thus providing shipping facilities to carry southern goods to market, and especially to European markets, and (3) by decreasing the cost of importing.

II

THE RAILROAD CONVENTIONS

The second series of conventions—those of 1845, 1849, and 1852—had quite a different objective than those preceding. Their interest was in internal improvements, chiefly railroads, the purpose of which was to divert the trade of the West into southern markets. These conventions had no logical connection with each other. Not one of them was called into being by its predecessor, and there were no provisions for calling adjourned sessions.

It was six years after the Charleston Convention that Captain Bingham of Arkansas arrived in Memphis to advocate a plank road to the Indian frontier. A committee of Memphis citizens discussed the proposition, and one of them, Dr. Shanks, suggested that a convention be held in July to consider the matter. A meeting was held but it was so hastily called that it was but scantily attended. Another convention was called to meet in November, 1845.¹ At the appointed time nearly six hundred delegates² assembled in Memphis. The convention was not exclusively southern, as delegations were present from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Iowa Territory as well as from the border states and the lower South. The South Carolina delegation contained four gentle-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22, quoting *Niles Register*, LV. 43, and *Richmond Enquirer*, June 26, 1838.

³⁷ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹ *DeBow's Review*, I. (January, 1846), 9.

² The *Richmond Enquirer* (November 21, 1845) accounts for only 421 delegates distributed as follows: Tennessee 193, Kentucky 7, Arkansas 12, Mississippi 125, Missouri 45, Alabama 10, South Carolina 7, North Carolina 1, Illinois 16, Indiana 4, Iowa 1. *DeBow's Review* (January, 1846, pp. 10-12) gives a register of the delegates as follows: Western Pennsylvania 3, Virginia 5, North Carolina 1, South Carolina 9, Alabama 24, Louisiana 14, Texas 3, Mississippi 178, Tennessee 218, Arkansas 22, Missouri 36, Kentucky 24, Illinois 22, Indiana 7, Iowa 4, Ohio 14.

men of note: John C. Calhoun, James Gadsden, J. D. B. DeBow, and W. H. Trescott. Other important members were Ex-governor J. C. Jones of Tennessee, Ex-senator C. C. Clay of Alabama, N. D. Coleman of Mississippi, and John Bell of Tennessee. John C. Calhoun was chosen president.³

It had been said that a convention of only a part of the states might be dangerous to the Union, but the convention repudiated the charge of disunionism in the following words: "That notwithstanding appearances indicate a disposition in the General Government neglectful of the interests of the West, including the necessity of conventions of the people, to make better known their conditions and wants, yet, this convention, far from desiring to engender sectional prejudices, or to encourage attempts to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, regard the North, and the South, and the East and West as ONE PEOPLE, in sympathy and interest, as in government and country, and hold their countrymen of every state to the duties and responsibilities of a closely cemented and indissoluble union."⁴ This feeling is further shown by an anecdote narrated by J. D. B. DeBow. When "an individual proposed that the time had come to remove the seat of government west of the Allegheny Mountains, he was rebuked by a unanimous vote of disapproval, and his proposition (was) not even allowed to appear on the Journal of the House."⁵ Contemporary prints declared that there was no evidence of party spirit;⁶ neither did a jealous or sectional spirit prevail among the states represented.⁷

Mr. Calhoun had formerly been diligent in opposing internal improvements in Congress on constitutional grounds, and doubtless many of those who hoped for government aid viewed with alarm the presence in the chair of this exponent of strict construction. But in the Memphis Convention, to the utter amazement of all, Calhoun seemed to repudiate such a policy.⁸

³ See *DeBow's Review*, I. 10-12 for list of delegates and officers. Cf. also *Richmond Enquirer*, November 21, 1845.

⁴ *DeBow's Review*, I. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, November 28, 1845.

⁷ *DeBow's Review*, I. 13.

⁸ For Mr. Calhoun's argument as to the lengths which the government might go in internal improvements, see *DeBow's Review*, II. 83-90.

He declared that the Mississippi River was a "great inland sea" and

"he did not, for a moment, question that the government was as much obligated to protect, defend, and improve it in every particular, as it was to conduct these operations on the Atlantic seaboard. . . . It was the genius of our government, and what was to him its beautiful feature, that what individual enterprise could effect alone, was to be left to individual enterprise; what a state and individuals could achieve together, was left to the joint action of states and individuals; but, what of these, separately or conjointly, neither was able to accomplish, that, and that only, was the province of the Federal Government. He thought this was the case in reference to the Mississippi River. There was an indirect aid, however, which might be furnished by the Federal arm, to internal improvement schemes. As a land proprietor (a position which he hoped it would not long occupy), the government, in consideration of the improved value of its public domain, might grant alternate sections of unoccupied land to the roads, etc., proposing to pass through it. A *quid pro quo* was only fair when a real benefit was obtained. A bounty, too, might be furnished to railroads, by allowing their iron duty free, which would be equivalent to two or three thousand dollars per mile. . . . In regard to the various railroad schemes in contemplation, he considered that which sought to connect the southern seaboard with the Mississippi Valley, as most important in every particular. Commercially, it threw open markets to western produce, at all times and seasons, and furnished two outlets, where but one had existed before. In a time of war, there could be no estimate of the value of this. The mouth of the Mississippi might be blockaded, and the Gulf of Mexico swept by foreign cruisers, and the vast produce of the valley would not be left to perish, but could seek its eastward passage in safety to the Atlantic ports—and when the canal, of which he was much in favor, was constructed, its way to the lakes would be equally open for a large portion of the year."⁹

The constructive work of the convention is embraced in a series of resolutions, twenty in number, which may be grouped under eight heads: (1) improvement of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, (2) connecting the upper Mississippi with the Great Lakes by a canal, (3) construction of a railroad from the Mississippi Valley to the South Atlantic ports, (4) improve-

⁹ *Ibid.*, I. 14-15.

ment of the mail service in the South and West, (5) improvement by the national government of the South Atlantic, Gulf, and Lake ports, (6) establishment in the South and West of national works and institutions, such as shipyards, drydocks, armories, foundries, and marine hospitals, (7) building of levees along the Mississippi by national appropriation, and (8) construction of a military road through Arkansas to the Indian frontier. Concerning all these matters, it was the sense of the convention that the Federal Government should either do the work itself or pay for having it done.¹⁰ The warehousing system was discussed, although it was not considered as the subject of resolutions due to a minority report signed by four members who contended that it did not come within the scope of the convention.¹¹ A committee of five, headed by James Gadsden of South Carolina, was appointed to memorialize Congress on these resolutions, and another committee, headed by John Bell of Tennessee, was appointed to prepare an address to the people of the South and West.¹² But Congress rejected the memorial of the Memphis Convention by a decisive majority, and nothing came of its resolutions.¹³

Nor was the convention successful in accomplishing the solidarity of the South. New Orleans and southern Louisiana delegates were offended by the scheme to connect the Atlantic with the Mississippi Valley, which they thought was an attempt to divert the interior trade away from New Orleans to the Atlantic ports, and this feeling was strong as late as 1855.¹⁴ The West was also offended at its failure to secure proper government aid. The nearest approach to carrying out the program for the West was a River and Harbor Bill which was carried through Congress by a combination of eastern and western votes, only to fall before the veto of President Polk.¹⁵ If the West could not secure internal improvement from a Democratic administration, why continue the alliance with the Democratic South?

¹⁰ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 18-20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴ See speech of Judge Walker at New Orleans in 1855, *DeBow's Review* (January, 1855) and New Orleans papers of that date.

¹⁵ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 125; *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV. 460-6.

The result was a convention at Chicago, July 5, 1847. It was reported that from five to eight thousand delegates¹⁶ assembled, although DeBow is disposed to question the number.¹⁷ They came from all the New England, middle and western states, and Kentucky, Missouri, Georgia, and Florida. Edward Bates of Missouri was elected president. This convention was as strongly controlled by the Whigs as the Memphis Convention had been by Democrats, and it contained more eastern men than the Memphis Convention had contained southern. It was intimated plainly that the way to secure internal improvements was to elect a president who would sign a bill for that purpose.¹⁸ Clay sympathized with the convention, and Webster wrote a letter discussing the question of internal improvements and taking a broader constitutional view than Calhoun.¹⁹ The resolutions of this convention show a desire for improvements on the western rivers, placing the constitutional defense on the clause relating to foreign and interstate commerce.²⁰

But if there was unanimity among the delegates at Chicago, there was plenty of criticism from the outside. "Col. Benton, by letter, denounces vehemently the proneness to importune Congress to aid in the furtherance of 'local or sectional objects'; yet strongly affirmed the constitutionality and propriety of a national canal from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi; and of other works of like character and importance."²¹ . . . Gov. Wright, by letter, has like fears of the diversion of the national funds to objects purely local" although he is favorable to harbor improvements "where the convenience and safety of Lake commerce" demand them.²² DeBow commented on the convention in this language: "The Memphis Convention sought to conciliate all parties, and agree on some practical plan of action—a

¹⁶ *DeBow's Review*, IV. 292.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁸ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 125, quoting the following: Calhoun to Duff Green, June 10, 1847, *Calhoun Correspondence*; *Niles Register*, LXII. 266-7, 310; LXIII. 24; Daniel Webster's Letter to the Convention, p. 219; Webster's Speech at the opening of the Northern New Hampshire Railway; *American Review*, VI. 111-23; *DeBow's Review*, IV. 122-7, 291-6.

¹⁹ *DeBow's Review*, IV. 123.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

compromise if necessary—which could meet the general approval and hearty coöperation of all sections as the very best which under the circumstances could be secured. The Chicago Convention, on the contrary, denounced this as impracticable and injurious and in no respects adequate to meet the requisition and necessities of the Northwest and the Lakes. It comes out boldly, cuts the Gordian knot, and declared openly for a system of internal improvements upon western lakes and rivers, co-extensive with all the requirements of their rapidly increasing commerce.”²³

In the interval between the conventions of 1845 and 1849, events of vast moment took place in the United States. The Mexican War ended in the acquisition of considerable territory, extending the western boundary of the United States to the Pacific. The discovery of gold in California (1848) and the consequent rush of immigration was suddenly populating a wilderness. The object of the two conventions of 1849 was to construct a railroad reaching into that region, connecting it with the rest of the Union. Both of these conventions were largely sectional in composition and spirit. One was a northern convention seeking a railroad by a central route; the other was a southern convention seeking a railroad with an eastern terminus so located as to deliver the trade of the newly acquired western region to the southern markets.

The northern convention assembled in St. Louis on October 15, 1849.²⁴ The large number of delegates was distributed as follows: Missouri 464, Pennsylvania 17, New York 3, Ohio 20, Tennessee 13, Indiana 35, Kentucky 3, Illinois 264, Iowa 47, Wisconsin 3, and Michigan 5. Delegations from Virginia and New Jersey arrived later in the session, and contemporary accounts mention the names of at least one delegate from Maryland, Minnesota, and Louisiana.²⁵ The St. Louis Convention recommended a trunk line with branches to Memphis, St. Louis, and Chicago.²⁶ After some dissensions due to personalities which caused the resignation of two successive presidents,²⁷

²³ *DeBow's Review*, p. 123.

²⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, October 23, 1849.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1849.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, October 26, 1849; *DeBow's Review*, VII. 551.

²⁷ *Richmond Enquirer*, October 23, 1849.

the convention adjourned on October 18 to reassemble the following April, sending a committee to Memphis to urge that convention to cooperate.²⁸

But the South had little faith in the achievements of the St. Louis Convention. It contended that a railroad terminus at St. Louis would be too far North to suit southern needs. It was argued that business carried over such a line would filter out at St. Louis by the St. Louis and Cincinnati Railroad, and find its way to Pittsburg and Philadelphia. Furthermore, the Illinois Central was being completed, which would tend to carry traffic to Chicago. In neither case could the South discern any advantage for itself. A southern route was wanted, a route which would take the trade of the West into the South and enrich southern business. For this Memphis was a suitable terminal, especially as it might become a connecting point for the projected road from Charleston, which had already been completed as far as Chattanooga, and was at that time under contract to Nashville.²⁹

With this end in view the Southern Convention met at Memphis on October 24, 1849.³⁰ Delegates were present from New York, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio.³¹ M. F. Maury of Virginia was chosen president.³² The avowed object of the convention was to fasten the newly acquired territories to the Union, and particularly to the southern portion of it. It was proposed to do this in three ways: (1) by building a railroad across the continent to the Pacific, a subject which became all absorbing as the series of conventions progressed;³³ (2) by increasing transportation facilities, either by ship canal or rail-

²⁸ *DeBow's Review*, VII. 551; *Richmond Enquirer*, October 26, 1849. Mr. Loughborough, the chairman of the committee, read an address at Memphis urging the two conventions to unite and avoid sectional feeling. The suggestion was laid upon the table and, as far as I have been able to determine, was never acted upon. *Richmond Enquirer*, October 30, 1849; *Charleston Courier*, October 30, 1849.

²⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, October 26, 1849.

³⁰ *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 217.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221; *Richmond Enquirer*, October 30, 1849.

³² *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 217; *Richmond Enquirer*, October 30, 1849; *Charleston Courier*, October 29, 1849.

³³ See "Intercommunication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans" by J. D. B. DeBow, *DeBow's Review*, June, 1849.

way across Mexico or Central America; and (3) by building a military road along the Mexican frontier.³⁴

The convention of 1845 had aimed at securing the trade of the Northwest and diverting it to the South Atlantic ports by means of railroads; that of 1849 aimed at nothing less than the control of the markets of the Orient! It estimated the value of the eastern trade at \$350,000,000, requiring about 2,000 ships of a gross value of \$60,000,000.³⁵ With a proper railroad in operation the immense trade of the East—Hawaii with her sugar; Celebes, Java, and Sumatra with their spices; Borneo with her gold, tin, antimony, and diamonds; the Philippines with their sugar, coffee, indigo, and hemp; Singapore, the great center of the Indian trade worth \$150,000,000 annually; Australia, Russian America, Tartary, Japan, China—all this would be within southern grasp!³⁶ The commerce which was carried in \$60,000,000 worth of bottoms could be carried in half as many. Estimating five per cent. upon the value of the ships discharged and time gained, a bonus of \$5,000,000 would be given to the world's commerce.³⁷ The average freight rate in the United States was at that time three cents per ton mile. Twenty years previously it had been six cents. If it fell at the same ratio within the next fifteen or twenty years—when the road would be completed—it would be only one and a half cents per ton mile. With such a rate, why could not the Pacific Railroad compete favorably?³⁸ "In regard to passengers, a different ground may be taken. The saving of time for them will be from twenty to thirty days. These passengers now pay from \$600 to \$900 (to go to California via the Horn or Isthmus). This route will not exceed \$250."³⁹

Another question was whether the European nations would use this route to carry on their eastern trade. Why should they not use it? It was from four to five thousand miles across the Pacific to San Francisco. From that point two thousand miles of railroad would take one to the Mississippi Valley.

³⁴ *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 221.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Seven hundred or one thousand miles by steamboat or continuous railroad brings one to the Gulf ports or to the Atlantic as one desires, and it is now only three or four thousand miles by ocean liner to Europe. The total distance is between ten and twelve thousand miles. What European country would not prefer to use this route, ten to twelve thousand miles long, as against the existing route of eighteen to twenty thousand miles? Whereas it required from 110 to 160 days to get from Europe to eastern Asia by the old route, the Pacific Railroad would shorten the time to from 25 to 37 days.⁴⁰ DeBow himself estimated that it would bring London within 32 days of Canton.⁴¹ He continued: "By means of this road, the great Indian trade, which has enriched every nation that has been engaged in it, would pass through our own country. Instead of going eastwardly, the British would find their most speedy and direct route to their East Indian possessions to be over this railroad, thence across the Pacific, thus realizing the grand idea of Columbus, in seeking a western route to India."⁴²

The cost of the railroad was variously estimated at from \$40,000,000 to \$100,000,000. The sum of \$100,000,000 was based upon an estimate of 2,000 miles and an average cost of \$50,000 per mile. But this, it was understood, was putting the case in the worst possible light. Upon the shortest projected route the distance would probably not exceed 1,500 miles, which at \$50,000 per mile would reduce the sum to \$75,000,000. But \$50,000 was double the average cost of railroads and five times the minimum. The average cost upon the shortest line would give less than \$40,000,000.⁴³ The report continues: "We sunk in the Mexican War, which seems not in any appreciable degree to have disturbed our general wealth and prosperity, an amount altogether adequate" to construct this road.⁴⁴

Five possible routes were indicated.⁴⁵ The convention recommended that Congress explore and survey all the routes designated by public opinion, and to select the one "best calcu-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, XI. 628.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 622.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, VIII. 226.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228. The convention suggested that the cost could be easily met by making large grants of land along the route.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-9.

lated to subserve the purposes of national defense, most convenient, most central, and which can be constructed upon the cheapest terms."⁴⁶ Naturally, the convention had a route of its own which it preferred. This route started at San Diego (which it considered preferable to San Francisco as a harbor) and passed through New Mexico and Arizona to Paso del Norte. From that point it was to extend across Texas to some terminus on the Mississippi, probably Memphis.⁴⁷ As a necessary preliminary to the construction of the Pacific Railroad, the convention urged a military road along the Mexican frontier, which meant that a chain of military posts should be established there. Such a procedure was thought necessary to protect immigration against Indian raids.⁴⁸

A transportation system across Central America was also considered as a temporary measure to be put into operation until such time as the Pacific Railroad could be built. The convention did not recommend government construction of either Isthmian railroad or canal, but intimated that it should be a matter of private enterprise.. Sentiment was that the national government should aid to the extent of granting contracts to private companies to carry mail, troops, and military stores by way of this route.⁴⁹ While different members expressed a preference as between the Panama, Nicaragua, and Tehuantepec routes,⁵⁰ the convention itself took no stand on the matter.

Lower Louisiana was now aroused. The Erie Canal had greatly increased the trade of New York. By drawing the commerce of the upper Mississippi, it had wrought a corresponding injury to New Orleans. The receipts of flour at Buffalo for the first eleven months of 1846 amounted to 871,665 barrels, while those of New Orleans for the entire year amounted to only 837,985 barrels. In the same length of time 1,474,871

⁴⁶ *DeBow's Review*, p. 221. This recommendation is in line with the thought of Col. James Gadsden. In a letter dated "Charleston, October 19, 1849," he calls attention to the two conventions at St. Louis and Memphis and hopes that "sectional and local conflicts in routes" will not mar the project. He urges "a joint memorial to Congress for a thorough scientific exploration of all the practical routes of railroads from the Mississippi to the Pacific" and to "let science and knowledge be the arbiters to conciliate conflicting interests" as to the best route. *Charleston Courier*, October 23, 1849.

⁴⁷ *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 229; *Charleston Courier*, October 30, 1849.

⁴⁸ *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 231-2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁵⁰ Messrs. Yeager, Forshey, and Larue supported the Tehuantepec route. *Richmond Enquirer*, October 30, 1849; *Charleston Courier*, October 29, 1849.

bushels of wheat reached Buffalo, while New Orleans received only a little over 800,000 bushels.⁵¹ The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal were built for the purpose of further tapping the commerce of the central West and concentrating that trade upon Baltimore.⁵² This was followed by additional improvements in transportation in western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—all tending to divert the trade to Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia.

The city of Charleston was alert. Her connection with Chattanooga by way of Augusta and Atlanta was completed, and her citizens had subscribed half a million dollars to carry the line from Chattanooga to Nashville. A projected road between Chattanooga and Memphis would tap the Tuscumbia Valley, taking to Charleston trade worth \$15,000,000 annually that had formerly gone to New Orleans. The projected Mobile and Ohio Railroad would send over 156,000 bales of cotton from northern Alabama to Mobile, costing New Orleans another \$10,000,000,⁵³ and the threatened connection of the Mississippi with the Atlantic seaports, as planned by the Memphis Conventions of 1845 and 1849, would yet more seriously cripple her Mississippi trade.⁵⁴ As Colonel H. W. Walter of Holly Springs, Mississippi, said at the convention of 1852: "A great portion of the New Orleans trade had within the last five or six months gone off by way of Charleston, and unless energy was employed, the whole of the cotton trade of the Eastern and Western valley of the Mississippi would go by that route."⁵⁵

In the spring of 1851 Governor J. C. Jones of Tennessee, president of the Memphis Railroad, called a meeting of business men at New Orleans in the interest of a proposed railroad from New Orleans to Memphis. A large amount of stock was subscribed, James Robb of Louisiana alone subscribing the amount of \$30,000. During the course of the discussion, J. D. B. DeBow introduced a resolution calling for a "Southern and Southwestern Convention" to be held at New Orleans, and

⁵¹ *DeBow's Review*, X. 691.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 691.

⁵⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, April 29, 1851.

⁵⁵ *DeBow's Review*, X. 691.

recommending that the city council take steps toward calling the meeting.⁵⁶ The resolution was unanimously adopted.

About the same time the friends of the New Orleans to Jackson Railroad project called a convention to meet at New Orleans on April 16.⁵⁷ This was also distinctly a railroad convention; the object of its proceedings was the advancement of the trade of New Orleans with the Mississippi Valley by means of a line of railroads. Delegates of four states—Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky—were present. James Robb presided. In the list of delegates we find the names of J. D. B. DeBow and Glendy Burke of Louisiana, and C. S. Tarpley of Mississippi⁵⁸—men who came to be closely associated with the convention movement. In an eloquent speech, Mr. Robb declared that the danger to New Orleans lay in the apathy of her people. Those who had wealth had no inclination for internal improvements; and those who saw the necessity of saving New Orleans' commerce had not the capital to carry out the measures required. He proposed a tax to meet the expenses of constructing the road.⁵⁹

The convention decided that the connection of New Orleans via Jackson, Mississippi, with the great system of railways then under construction and projected in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee was desirable. It favored the project of a railroad along the banks of the Mississippi to Baton Rouge, and thence to diverge to Jackson. The distance was 213 miles and the estimated cost \$2,000,000. A proposal for a competing route by way of Madisonville was tabled by a heavy vote, whereupon the Madisonville delegation withdrew from the convention, formed an organization of their own for executing their scheme, and passed resolutions of indignation.⁶⁰ The policy of constructing railroads from Jackson, Mississippi, to Selma, Alabama, from Jackson to Holly Springs, Mississippi, and from some point on the southern boundary line of Tennessee to some point in Kentucky opposite or near Cairo, Illinois was also

⁵⁶ *DeBow's Review*, p. 465.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 465, 690.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, XI. 77. Mr. Robb also favored the idea of a tax in the Southern and Southwestern Railroad Convention at New Orleans in 1852. *DeBow's Review*, XII. 546-7.

⁶⁰ *DeBow's Review*, X. 693; XI. 76; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 29, 1851.

considered by the convention.⁶¹ Mr. DeBow proposed a resolution that the convention resolve itself into a general Southern and Southwestern Railroad Convention to meet in New Orleans in December,⁶² but nothing came of the matter.⁶³

On June 4, still another railroad convention met in New Orleans, the chairman being Maunsel White of that city. Its members were men of wealth, representing a total capital of from \$10,000,000 to \$15,000,000.⁶⁴ Their object was to build a railroad from New Orleans to the northwestern part of Louisiana. The recent meetings at New Orleans and similar gatherings at Memphis, Shreveport, and Jackson probably all had a share in bringing this convention together.⁶⁵ Governor Alexander Moulton of Louisiana, J. D. B. DeBow, Glendy Burke, and Buckner H. Payne were present as delegates.⁶⁶ During the course of the deliberations a committee was appointed to address the people of the southern and western states in the interest of a general railroad convention to be held at New Orleans on January 5, 1852.⁶⁷ The address emphasized the railroad needs of the Mississippi Valley and New Orleans, but did not overlook the "southern decline" and the necessity for united action in the South to advance her commercial interests.⁶⁸

The interest in this railroad convention seems to have been widespread. The governor of Louisiana appointed a large number of delegates. City and county meetings for the appointment of local delegates were held in many parts of Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas.⁶⁹ When the convention assembled on January 5,⁷⁰ eleven states were represented. DeBow says that between six hundred and eight hundred delegates were in attendance,⁷¹ but only three hundred

⁶¹ *Richmond Enquirer*, April 29, 1851.

⁶² *DeBow's Review*, XI. 74.

⁶³ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁶⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XI. 214.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 673.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 340-1. The committee consisted of Glendy Burke, Gov. Alexander Moulton, A. D. Crossman, Mayor of New Orleans, J. D. B. DeBow—all of Louisiana—and Col. C. S. Tarpley of Mississippi.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, VII. 119.

⁷⁰ The convention adjourned January 9.

⁷¹ *DeBow's Review*, XII. 305.

and eighty registered.⁷² Ex-Governor Alexander Moulton of Louisiana was chosen president.⁷³ In the list of delegates were a number of men interested in the economic welfare of the South: Joseph Forsyth of Florida, William M. Burwell of Virginia, James Robb, Glendy Burke, H. S. Buckner, Bishop Leonidas Polk, J. P. Benjamin, and J. D. B. DeBow of Louisiana, Albert Pike and Absolom Fowler of Arkansas, John T. Mills of Texas, C. S. Tarpley of Mississippi, Rev. J. H. Otey of Tennessee, and H. W. Walter of Mississippi.⁷⁴ Speeches were made by James Robb,⁷⁵ J. T. Trezevant,⁷⁶ J. D. B. DeBow,⁷⁷ Judge John T. Mills,⁷⁸ J. P. Benjamin,⁷⁹ Colonel C. S. Tarpley,⁸⁰ and William M. Burwell⁸¹ in which frequent references to southern commercial dependence were made. Several measures of internal improvement other than railroads were proposed, but all were voted down—"They would injure the object of the convention,"⁸² which was a scheme of railroad development. In all, the convention advocated three lines of development: (1) a railroad to the Pacific, (2) a southwestern railroad to Washington, and (3) an Isthmian railroad by way of Tehuantepec. A committee on routes, headed by Mr. Burwell of Virginia, reported an extensive list of railroad improvements "essential to the equality and unity of the states of this confederacy,"⁸³ which he suggested could be built by slave labor.⁸⁴ Three sources of aid in the construction of these railroads were suggested; the nation, the states, and the community.

⁷² They are distributed as follows: Louisiana 310, Virginia 2, Kentucky 7, Tennessee 11, Alabama 6, Florida 3, Missouri 2, Mississippi 23, Arkansas 10, Texas 5, and Georgia 1. We are told by DeBow that the register was not complete. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 175, places the number of delegates at 374. This is certainly an error as the convention register shows six more than that.

⁷³ *DeBow's Review*, XII. 307. For proceedings of the convention, see *ibid.*, pp. 305-32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 306-7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 543 ff.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 551 ff.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 554 ff.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 562-3. Judge Mills threatened to withdraw with the Texas delegates because northeastern Texas did not seem to be considered in the railroad program.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 563-4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 565-6.

⁸¹ *Richmond Enquirer*, January 23, 1852.

⁸² *DeBow's Review*, XII. 317-18.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁸⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, January 23, 1852.

There was nothing revolutionary in the thought that the national government should aid in the construction of a Pacific Railroad. It could easily do so by the granting of sections of land to the railroad company. As the road was constructed, immigrants would settle along its lines, the railroad could sell its lands, and use the money to pay for construction. This was the thought before the convention. Just how the states were to render aid was not specified. The resolutions called for the "application of the resources of the state," which is somewhat indefinite to say the least. The resolutions further proposed that all the states represented make it lawful for cities, towns, parishes, or counties to take stock in the railroad if a majority of the voters expressed a wish to do so.⁸⁵ Mr. Davis points out that the idea of community aid was the distinct achievement of the convention.⁸⁶

DeBow had hoped that this convention would result in building the Pacific Railroad.⁸⁷ He preferred any route to none at all, but his preference was naturally for a southern route, especially by way of the Gila River and Paso del Norte,⁸⁸ with a terminus at Memphis.⁸⁹ He felt that the federal government could easily afford to construct the road at its own expense: "Our government owns an immense amount of public land, lying west of the Mississippi River, through which this road would necessarily run; and its construction would bring these lands into the market, increase the demand for them and cause them to bring much better prices than they would otherwise bring."⁹⁰

The idea that the railroad would cause an increase in property values was not without a foundation of fact. It was said that the construction of the Erie Canal had increased land values 100% and doubled the population along the route from 1820

⁸⁵ "Resolved, That it is the right of the people, whenever they may deem it proper, to subscribe through their municipal parochial corporations, for the stock of the rail-roads calculated to advance their interests, and that the legislatures of the different states ought, by law, to authorize their cities, parishes and counties, to make such subscription when desired by the respective inhabitants." *DeBow's Review*, XII, 314.

⁸⁶ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁸⁷ It is very probable that a great part of the South's rapid progress in railroad building during the next few years was due to this convention.

⁸⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XI, 622.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 629.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 623.

to 1845.⁹¹ The "Address of the Committee to the Southern and Western States" declared that in fifteen years the property values in New York City had advanced 149% although they had not advanced by one dollar in the preceding ten years.⁹² Speaking of the effect of railroads on Charleston, the committee quoted Col. Gadsden: "The valuation of property on the South Carolina Railroad, compared before and since its construction, shows—1830, \$11,337,012: 1846, \$19,075,157: gain, \$7,638,145. The city of Charleston shows real estate, 1830, \$8,366,914: 1840, \$13,527,743: gain, \$5,160,829. This increase in trade and the value of real estate, I insist has been primarily attributable to the introduction of railroads."⁹³ Mobile's real estate was said to have advanced \$5,000,000 in one year as a result of the projected railroad to Ohio.⁹⁴ On the authority of Governor Floyd of Virginia, they declared that real estate values in that state had increased from \$209,893,978 in 1819 to \$211,930,508 in 1838 and to \$274,680,226 in 1850. "This result has been owing chiefly to the impulse imparted to the industry of the state by the facilities which her public works have afforded to our citizens, for transporting their produce to market."⁹⁵ Governor Floyd also pointed to Boston, where property values had increased in a single year from \$120,114,574 to \$266,646,844, or over 120%. "That this great increase has been the result of her railway improvements, is denied by none—no other element of prosperity than this has been added to those already possessed by her; and we have therefore a right to infer that from this source flows the extraordinary tide of wealth. In 1839, Boston had 167 miles of railroad . . . in 1859 she is connected with 3,000 miles. . . . Her annual manufactures are worth \$91,000,000: and the home trade of Boston is estimated to be worth annually the immense sum of \$200,000,000."⁹⁶ The "Address" further insisted: "The increase in value of real estate in the counties bordering on the Vicksburg and Jackson Railroad has been estimated from \$700,000 to \$7,000,000,

⁹¹ *DeBow's Review*, III. 99.

⁹² *Ibid.*, XI. 149.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

whilst on the Nashville and Chattanooga road, in four counties, the gain in the value of taxable property has been \$2,-554,639.”⁹⁷

One of the avowed objects of the projected road was to bind California more closely to the Union. “If we permit California to remain disconnected from the other nations of the Republic’s commerce, how long will it be before she is disconnected politically?” . . . The Pacific Railroad “will greatly improve the character of the population in California. What that country needs most at this time is a permanent population. This it can never have until there are increased facilities for reaching it. Men are now unwilling to take their families with them and the consequence is that the population is by no means fixed and settled.”⁹⁸

The Pacific Railroad would also influence the development of the cotton industry. “It is evident, that having a direct communication with China and other Eastern countries, the consumption of cotton will be greatly increased within a few years.”⁹⁹ “It is estimated that there are enough persons in China alone to consume all the cotton now raised in the United States if its use should become general among them.”¹⁰⁰

The period of the late forties and early fifties was one of railroad development throughout the entire Union. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago were improving their transportation facilities. It was perfectly natural that Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, and other southern cities should be anxious to secure the valuable trade which they saw flowing to their progressive northern rivals. At first their objective was to connect the Atlantic and Gulf ports with the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys. But the settlement of California opened up a grander prospect. Southern control of a railroad to the Pacific would bind California to the southern portion of the Union and would probably end by stamping that province with southern political and economic ideals—in short, redeem California as slave territory. Southern control of such a rail-

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 627.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 624.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

road would result in economic prosperity for the South, due not only to the California trade but to the trade of eastern Asia and the Indies as well. Stimulation of cotton production and inflation of land values were also valuable considerations. Convention leaders were anxious that the government should construct the railroad by the southern route. By 1852 interest had been aroused, but nothing definite had been accomplished. As rival routes began to find defenders, the railway men of the South became more and more anxious concerning the fate of their particular schemes. The intensity of feeling is shown in the next series of conventions.

III

THE CONVENTION MOVEMENT AT ITS HEIGHT

The remaining conventions are intimately connected. Beginning in 1852, the next seven years saw meetings occurring annually, each convention summoning an adjourned session in some other city. Suggestions for such a continuous convention which would develop the resources of the South and increase her wealth and population had come from several sources. J. D. B. DeBow had suggested a manufacturers' convention¹ and had tried to arrange for an industrial convention at New Orleans in 1851.² He believed that such a convention would promote shipbuilding and direct trade and make possible the retention at home of millions of dollars which were contributed annually to the North.³ In the New Orleans Railroad Convention of January, 1852, he had proposed that the convention resolve itself into a commercial association,⁴ but the suggestion was not acted upon. It is said that C. G. Baylor of Baltimore,

¹ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 128, quoting *DeBow's Review*, IX. 256; X. 107.

² *Ibid.*, p. 128, quoting *DeBow's Review*, IX. 256, 460.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 128, quoting *DeBow's Review*, X. 107.

⁴ "Let us preserve and perpetuate this organization. Let the members now present, who have been selected as judiciously as any that ever met in the country, resolve that they will continue these meetings, and carry on these discussions, until all the great fruits we desire are reaped. . . . Let this convention resolve itself into an association for the promotion of the great industrial interests of the Southern and Western States. Let us provide for its future annual meetings, say at Nashville, at Jackson, at St. Louis, at Mobile, at Charleston . . . thus this convention will become in time the great center of the industrial interests of this region. It will collect through its committees and correspondence extensive information, which will be distributed gratuitously at the annual meetings. No one can estimate the good that will be effected. It will be the focus to which leading practical minds will be drawn. It will be felt each moment, and throughout all our limits. No more powerful agency could be devised." The full speech is given in *DeBow's Review*, XII. 554-562.

the editor of the *Cotton Plant*, also advocated such a measure.⁵ At last a number of southern leaders, headed by Senator William C. Dawson of Georgia, asked the Baltimore business men to inaugurate the movement.⁶ Thus it happened that in October 1852 there appeared a short circular signed by nineteen members of the Baltimore Board of Trade inviting the friends of southern commerce to meet in their city the following December.⁷

Nearly two hundred representatives from twelve states⁸ and the District of Columbia assembled at Baltimore on December 18. Among the distinguished persons present were Senator Wm. C. Dawson of Georgia, Governor James C. Jones of Tennessee, Hon. J. D. Freeman of Mississippi, Hon. J. R. Underwood, Richard Apperson, and John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky, Hon. T. L. Clingman of North Carolina, Hon. J. L. Orr of South Carolina, Lieut. M. F. Maury of the District of Columbia, Hon. J. L. Robinson of Indiana, Hon. John Moore of Louisiana, Hon. T. M. Taylor of Missouri, Hon. R. I. Bowie of Maryland, Hon. Alexander White of Alabama, C. G. Baylor, editor of the *Cotton Plant*, and Mr. Graef, consul for Holland residing at Baltimore.⁹ Wm. C. Dawson was elected president. Brantz Mayer read an address of welcome, greeting the convention on behalf of the Board of Trade.¹⁰ He assured the convention that Baltimore was a southern city, and called attention to its water-power "sufficient for near half a million spindles," the abundant coal and iron deposits nearby, the splendid agricultural country adjoining, and her facilities for handling commerce.¹¹ The completion of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad would, he said, place Ohio within fifteen hours

⁵ Russel, op. cit., p. 128, quoting *Memphis Daily Appeal*, January 23, 1853, and *Richmond Enquirer*, December 24, 1852.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128, quoting *New York Herald*, April 15, 1854, and *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 17, 1855.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128, quoting *Baltimore Sun*, December 17, 1852; *DeBow's Review*, XIII. 427.

⁸ Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

⁹ *National Intelligencer*, December 20, 1852; *Charleston Courier*, December 22, 1852; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 21, 1852; *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 373.

¹⁰ *Baltimore Sun*, December 20, 1852; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 24, 1852; *Charleston Courier*, December 22, 1852; *National Intelligencer*, December 20, 1852; *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 374 f.

¹¹ *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 377.

of the Chesapeake,¹² while lines of railroads and steamers to all parts of the neighboring states converged upon Baltimore, "making our city the great central axle of trade," "the central entrepot of the Union on tidewater—the great receptacle of internal produce and foreign distribution."¹³ He referred to Baltimore's great foreign trade with Europe, the West Indies, South America, and Canada.¹⁴ In short, Baltimore was especially fitted for the purpose of assisting the South to achieve its commercial independence, and the best way to achieve this independence was to make Baltimore the commercial capital of the South. William Burwell of Virginia said that he considered Norfolk preferable.¹⁵

The convention gave some consideration to the Pacific Railroad, although nothing definite was accomplished. A series of nine resolutions were adopted, one of which extended thanks to the city for its hospitality, and another repudiated sectionalism. The others provided for:

- (1) Increase of inter-communication between the cities and states of the South, West, and Southwest;
- (2) Improvement of harbors on the Atlantic coast;
- (3) Establishment of steamship lines between Baltimore and Liverpool and other ports of Europe;
- (4) Necessity for the Federal Government to foster steamship communication between the South and the Amazon, and build up southern shipping;
- (5) Importance of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to the South and West.¹⁶

All of these resolutions are very general in statement and none of them explain just how the necessary end was to be accomplished. The only new feature of the convention was the raising of the question of trade relations between the South and the Amazon Valley. The convention adjourned to meet at Memphis in June the following year.

¹² *DeBow's Review*, p. 375.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 377-8.

¹⁵ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁶ *National Intelligencer*, December 30, 1852; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 24, 1852.

The Baltimore convention did not give satisfaction. The *Richmond Enquirer* thought that the address of welcome made too many allusions to Baltimore.¹⁷ The press of New Orleans thought that the movement was got up by Baltimore to catch trade. New Orleans was a better southern city, and Baltimore was trying to injure her trade by diverting it.¹⁸ In fact, only Lieutenant Maury seemed to remember that there was such a place as Virginia.¹⁹

The adjourned session of the Baltimore Convention met at Memphis on June 6, 1853, and remained in session until June 9. Possibly one thousand delegates were present.²⁰ Senator William C. Dawson of Georgia was again elected president.²¹ Other important southern leaders in attendance were Mayor Bryne of Vicksburg, Governor H. S. Foote, General John A. Quitman, T. T. Trezevant, and J. N. Davis of Mississippi; John Bell and Bishop J. H. Otey of Tennessee; Richard Apperson of Kentucky; and H. Cobb of Missouri.²² Upon taking the chair, Senator Dawson stated the objects of the convention as he understood them. He declared that the Southern Commercial Convention was not a sectional convention in any derogatory sense; that it was not actuated by any feelings of hostility toward any portion of the Union, but that action was necessary because the people of the South and Southwest were suffering from want of proper development of their natural resources. Agriculture, commerce, manufactures, transportation facilities, development of seaports, direct trade, steamship lines to Europe and South America, improvement of rivers and harbors, and

¹⁷ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 130, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*, December 21, 1852; and April 14, 1854.

¹⁸ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 131, quoting *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 354; *Charleston Courier*, March 3, 1854, quoting the *New Orleans Delta*; *Memphis Eagle and Enquirer*, June 16, 1853, letter from C. G. Baylor, editor of the *Cotton Plant* (Baltimore); *Memphis Daily Appeal*, June 23, 1853; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 4, 1855.

¹⁹ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁰ DeBow says that there were between 4,000 and 5,000 delegates from fifteen states, but the register gives a total of 496 by actual count distributed as follows: Alabama 18, Arkansas 60, Georgia 10, Illinois 1, Indiana 1, Kentucky 17, Louisiana 24, Maryland 6, Mississippi 92, Missouri 27, South Carolina 3, Tennessee 225, Texas 7, Virginia 5. *DeBow's Review*, XV. 260-1. It is very possible that all the delegates did not register. The *Charleston Courier*, June 9, 1853, and *National Intelligencer*, June 8, 1853, unite in giving the attendance at about 1,000.

²¹ Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XV. 254-74; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, June 7, 10, 20, 1853.

²² *DeBow's Review*, XV. 259-61.

the Pacific Railroad were all proper subjects for consideration.²³

The resolutions finally adopted by the convention dealt with almost every economic need of the South: direct trade, steamship communication with Europe, removal of obstructions to Mississippi navigation, improvement of harbors,²⁴ encouragement of manufactures and mechanical arts, and the consummation of negotiations with Mexico for the purpose of securing a right of way across Tehuantepec.²⁵ The convention recommended the education of southern children at home by native teachers and from southern books.²⁶ A committee was appointed to publish and distribute in Europe a report of the facilities of the South and West for the manufacture of cotton.²⁷ Long speeches were made on the subject of free navigation of the Amazon and its importance to the South. This was one of the chief themes of the convention although there was not unanimous support in its favor.²⁸ General Quitman said in opposition that he thought the convention was "going a little too far in a practical point of view in talking of the Valley of the Amazon; there was a beautiful Island somewhat nearer which was worthy of their attention." However, the Thrasher Resolution concerning Cuba,²⁹ to which he alluded, was not adopted on account of the objection that a political subject was not a fit object for discussion at a commercial convention.³⁰

²³ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 256 ff.

²⁴ Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and Richmond.

²⁵ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 262 ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 262 ff; *Richmond Enquirer*, June 21, 1853; *Charleston Courier*, June 9, 10, 1853; *National Intelligencer*, June 9, 10, 1853.

²⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 274. The membership of this committee was as follows: Hamilton Smith, Cannelton, Ind.; S. D. Morgan, Nashville, Tenn.; W. Gregg, Charleston, S. C.; C. G. Baylor, Washington, D. C.; A. Fowler, Little Rock, Ark.

²⁸ *Charleston Courier*, June 9, 10, 1853; *Richmond Enquirer*, June 21, 1852; M. F. Maury, "Valley of the Amazon," *DeBow's Review*, May, 1853; Lieut. Herndon, "Region of the Amazon," *DeBow's Review*, March, 1854; Lieut. Gibbon, "Exploration of the Amazon," *DeBow's Review*, March, 1855; "Shall the Amazon and Mississippi reciprocate Trade," *DeBow's Review*, February, 1853.

²⁹ "Whereas, ten thousand American ships, laden with the products of Southern and Southwestern States, and their returns to the value of \$300,000,000, pass annually through the narrow strait between Cuba and Florida; and as this commerce must inevitably increase with the increasing population of the great Valley of the West; and the opening of the Isthmus routes to the Pacific; . . .

"Be it resolved, that we deem the acquisition of the Island of Cuba important to the proper protection of this great and constantly increasing commerce, and to the security of our Southern waters, and we urge its consideration upon the people and government of our country as a question of national necessity and of national supremacy." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 269.

³⁰ *National Intelligencer*, June 10, 1853.

But the most important subject was the Pacific Railroad.³¹ "This," said the New Orleans Delta, "was the Aaron's rod that swallowed up all others. This is the great panacea which is to release the South from its bondage to the North, which is to pour untold wealth into our lap; which is to build up cities, steamships, manufactories, educate our children, and draw into our control what Mr. Bell calls 'the untold wealth of the gorgeous East.'"³² The road was declared to be a national necessity, and Congress was urged to construct the main trunk at the earliest possible period. John Bell thought that the government ought to build it, and the convention recommended Congress to make large donations of public lands for that purpose. No specific route was recommended.

The Memphis Convention did not impress the country with its results. The *New York Tribune* was inclined to treat it as visionary. "Bishop Otey's talk on Amazonia was chaff. Light seems to be breaking at the South as regards protection. The significant resolution passed was that relating to manufactures. This is the right move for the South. Dependence on Liverpool, England, is the cause of the depression in the South. Direct trade is what the South wants, but she must get this trade by building up her home resources."³³ New Orleans papers were no better impressed. "We have by telegraph a brief (summary of the resolutions)," says the *Weekly Picayune*, "but little is (gained) thereby. They correspond with the program of what was to be proposed; but a declaration of purposes and wishes will do little to accomplish their objects without something more than resolutions and speeches. . . . Speeches and reports,

³¹ "Resolved, That a railroad from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Ocean is demanded, not only by commercial and individual interests, but by our national supremacy.

"Resolved, That as soon as the surveys, recently ordered by Congress, are completed, the general government should adopt such steps as will insure the completion of the main trunk of said road at the earliest possible period.

"Resolved, That as the general government could be expected to construct only one main trunk, it should be located on that route which scientific explorations shall show combines, in the greatest degree, the advantages of genial and temperate climate, fertility of soil, cheapness of construction, and accessibility at all seasons from all portions of the Union.

"Resolved, That in the opinion of the Convention, it is right, and expedient and proper, that the general government shall make large donations of public lands to the different states, bordering on either side of the Mississippi, to enable all sections of the Union, however remote, to connect themselves with the main trunk." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 267.

³² Russel, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*, June 24, 1853.

³³ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 180, quoting *New York Tribune*, February 15, 1853.

however able and convincing, produce no immediate influence on the public affairs unless accompanied by active organization and strengthened by cordial (cooperation) and followed by continuous effort.”³⁴ It was even charged by some of the delegates that the Memphis Convention was not a commercial convention at all, but a Whig convention “and that its proceedings ought to have been concluded by nominating a Whig candidate for the Presidency.” The constitutional objection to a Pacific Railroad at government expense was ridiculed as “old fogysm.” The *Richmond Enquirer* thus quotes the *New Orleans Courier*: “The question of the right of the federal government to construct all public works needed for commerce and public convenience was assumed to be settled and determined in the Convention of 1845 by the declaration of Mr. Calhoun that the Mississippi River was a great inland sea. . . . But the importance of a great stream like the Mississippi which passes through eight or ten states . . . is quite a different proposition from one which proposes to invest the federal government with the power of expending more than \$1,000,000 in constructing a road through the States and territories of this Union.”³⁵

The convention which met at Charleston on April 10, 1854, was the largest of the whole series.³⁶ Eight hundred and fifty-seven delegates came together from thirteen states.³⁷ William C. Dawson was elected president for the third time. Other prominent personages in attendance were Lieutenant-governor Leitch of Virginia, Lieutenant Herndon, Albert Pike of Arkansas, N. D. Coleman and T. A. Marshall of Mississippi, R. B. Rhett and C. G. Memminger of South Carolina, Judge E. A. Nesbit of Georgia, General Leslie Combs and Lieutenant M. F. Maury of Kentucky, Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, Ex-Governor Trousdale of Tennessee, and Governor James C. Jones of the

³⁴ *New Orleans Weekly Picayune*, June 13, 1853.

³⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, July 1, 1853.

³⁶ Proceedings in *Charleston Courier*, April 11-14, 17, 18, 1854; *New York Herald*, April 14-19, 1854; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854; *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 632-41; XVII. 91-9, 200-13, 250-61, 398-410, 491-510.

³⁷ Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Missouri.

same state.³⁸ The building of the Pacific Railroad was the chief item of interest.

In the meantime, this question had injected itself into national politics. Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois was interested in the West, and desired a railroad which would terminate on the western border of Iowa, whence connections could be made with the Chicago roads. If this route should be completed, and the territory opened for settlement, Chicago would, without doubt, become the greatest city of the West. Thomas H. Benton of Missouri was also interested in the Pacific Railroad, but his interests were naturally tied up with those of his state, and his efforts were bent toward securing St. Louis as the eastern terminus. The extreme southerners, led by Jefferson Davis, desired the route along the Gila River, through Texas, and a terminus at Memphis. Davis had entered into a log-rolling arrangement with Benton and Atchison, the leaders of two factions in Missouri, whereby they were to use their influence for a road constructed along the southern route with one terminus at Memphis and a branch line to St. Louis. The effect would be to divide the commerce between the two cities.

Repeated efforts of Douglas to pass a bill organizing Nebraska Territory met with failure.³⁹ The southern members in Congress feared that if this territory was opened to settlement, the railroad would go by that route. Douglas saw that in order to win his project he must concede some point to the South, apparently some concession in the matter of slavery. On January 4, 1854, he brought in a bill for territorial organization of the region west of Iowa and Missouri, coupled with a proposal to open the region to slavery on a "squatter sovereignty" basis. This secured the immediate support of Atchison and the pro-slavery party and was passed by both houses.⁴⁰

The organization of Kansas and Nebraska made it apparent to all thinking southerners that the Pacific Railroad would not go by the southern route if the government built it. Conse-

³⁸ *Washington Sentinel*, April 13, 1854; *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 633-5.

³⁹ In 1844, 1848, 1852, and 1853.

⁴⁰ W. E. Dodd, *Statesmen of the Old South*, pp. 199-202; Allen Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas*, p. 220 ff. Dodd says: "From the evidence now available I think it hardly open to successful dispute that his (Douglas') major interest was in the building of the railway."

quently Albert Pike of Arkansas arose in the Charleston Convention and denounced any reliance on Congress for the building of the road.⁴¹ He proposed a plan by which the road was to be built by the southern states as a corporation under a charter granted by the legislature of Virginia. According to his plan each of the southern states should subscribe not less than \$2,000,000; the state of California should be invited to contribute a like amount; the Creek, Choctaw, and Cherokee Indians should be solicited to invest their mite; and cities, corporations, and individuals throughout the South should be urged to subscribe. Each state was to be represented equally on the board of directors. It was proposed to give the corporation power in the charter to negotiate with Mexico for a right of way through her territory to the Gulf of California.⁴² The plan was opposed by some of the ablest and most practical men in the convention,⁴³ including T. A. Marshall of Mississippi, Judge W. C. Dawson of Georgia, Lieutenant M. F. Maury, Judge E. A. Nesbit of Georgia, Governor J. C. Jones of Tennessee, and N. D. Coleman of Mississippi—the last two being railroad men. Governor Jones thought it would be preferable to allow the United States to negotiate with Mexico rather than a private corporation, since a corporation would have no power to compel Mexico to fulfill its obligations. Mr. Coleman condemned it because “it savored of politics,” and a commercial convention ought not to be engaged in political agitation. He objected to the states negotiating with a foreign nation on constitutional grounds. He called attention to the fact that the constitutions of Maryland, Kentucky, and Louisiana forbade them taking part in such a corporation, while Mississippi was not financially able to raise \$2,000,000 for the scheme. Judge Nesbit attacked it on constitutional and sectional grounds. Judge Dawson pointed out that there was no likelihood of such a corporation being able to induce Mexico to surrender a right of way over her territory; and all agreed in condemning the plan as impracticable and unconstitutional.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 97; *Washington Sentinel*, April 13, 1854.

⁴² *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 635-7; *Washington Sentinel*, April 18, 1854.

⁴³ *Washington Sentinel*, April 18, 1854.

⁴⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 402-9.

In closing the debate on his plan, Pike took strong sectional grounds.⁴⁵ He declared that the Northwest was bidding for immigration. Foreigners settling in that region were given the privilege of voting before becoming naturalized. The Homestead Act and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill were further bids for immigration into the Northwest. The consequence was that forty Europeans entered that country to one Southerner. Germans and Irish predominated. They were ignorant of the advantages of southern institutions, and therefore the North was increasing its political predominance at southern expense. When this land should be finally settled, and the South hopelessly in the minority, there would be a Pacific Railroad, but it would be over a northern route. "The North knew full well that wherever the Pacific Railroad went, there too, would go the power and wealth of the country. . . . We do not want a Northern company to have control of the immense trade which will pass over this road. We want Southern men to have it."⁴⁶ He attacked the constitutional argument and tore it to shreds. His eloquence swept everything before it and when the measure came to a vote, the convention, voting by states, unanimously endorsed Pike's plan.

As originally brought in by the committee, the resolutions dealing with the Pacific Railroad contained a section recommending favorable action on the Gadsden Treaty then pending in the Senate.⁴⁷ This treaty had been negotiated for the purpose of securing the desired territory and it was rumored that the North was opposing it on account of unwillingness to see the road constructed on this route.⁴⁸ Governor Jones, Judge Dawson, and General Gadsden himself addressed the convention on the subject of the Treaty. All deprecated the attempt to discuss

⁴⁵ "If the government of the United States, in case of invasion, or disregard for our rights by the republic (of Mexico) . . . would not interfere to protect the rights of her own citizens there . . . then I, for one, will cease to be an American citizen, and you may raise your banner of secession, and I will be found fighting under it. . . . I never apprehended that I should stand under a South Carolina sun and in the city of Charleston, and insist that the States had a right to combine together for the purpose of building a railroad through this or any other country." *DeBow's Review*, VII. 502-5.

⁴⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 208-12, 499-506.

⁴⁷ "That the Gadsden Treaty, so far as it covers the right of way through Mexico, is approved, and its adoption urged by this convention."

⁴⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 210, 409; *New York Herald*, April 19, 1854; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854; *Baltimore Sun*, April 13, 1854.

a political question which a commercial convention was supposed to know nothing about, especially as the Senate had considered the Treaty in secret session.⁴⁹ The resolution was therefore withdrawn by the committee.

Other resolutions provided for the encouragement of manufacturing and mining, improvement of southern mail service, encouragement of "home" education, and the extension of railroads. Direct trade with Europe was advocated and a uniform system of coinage among nations endorsed. A committee was appointed to collect statistical information relative to manufactures and mining in the South and report to the next convention. A second committee was appointed to memorialize Congress on the following subjects:

- (1) Reduction or remission of the duties on railway iron;
- (2) The passage of an act improving the merchant service by encouraging boys to go to sea and preventing desertion;
- (3) To send one or two small naval steamers to explore the tributaries of the Amazon;
- (4) Encouragement of the establishment of a line of mail steamers between a southern port and the mouth of the Amazon or some Brazilian port;
- (5) Encouragement of a direct mail route between a southern port and Europe;
- (6) Improvement of harbors and navigable rivers.⁵⁰

The more serious work of the convention was enlivened with what might be called snatches of "humor." On April 13 a spicy debate occurred relative to the status of a reporter from the *New York Tribune*, the convention feeling ill-disposed toward him on account of the abolition tendencies of his paper.⁵¹ Mr. Polk of Tennessee moved "that the government of the United States 'purchase or take the Island of Cuba.'" The

⁴⁹ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 408-10; *Washington Daily Globe*, April 17, 1854.

⁵⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 635-41; *Washington Sentinel*, April 18, 1854; *Washington Daily Globe*, April 15, 1854; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854; *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* (Columbia), April 18, 1854.

⁵¹ *Washington Sentinel*, April 18, 1854; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854; *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian*, April 18, 1854. A motion the day before had extended to newspaper men the privileges of the convention as honorary delegates. The convention objected to an "abolition delegate." "The whole proceeding was very foolish . . . the object and motives of the mover of the original resolution were misunderstood, and the convention doubtless adopted it without knowing precisely what they voted for." *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian*, April 18, 1854.

applause that greeted this resolution was increased by another proposition "that we purchase or take the whole of Mexico."⁵²

Though not especially successful from the practical view of results, the convention was more satisfactory than the two preceding ones. It seems to have aroused no opposition in the South, as did Baltimore's attempt at self-advertising and Memphis' addiction to "Whiggery." The *New York Times* "pooh-poohed" the whole affair: "The convention did good as a safety valve and extinguisher. No disunion plan was brought forth and the reopening of the slave trade was hardly noticed. The main objects of the convention were steamers to Europe and home manufactures. These cannot amount to much without money, and money cannot be obtained outside of Wall street."⁵³ But despite this gentle railing the series of southern conventions was tending to solidify the South.

The convention of 1855 was held at New Orleans. It assembled on January 9 under the presidency of General Mirabeau B. Lamar of Texas.⁵⁴ It was poorly attended, there being but 212 delegates from twelve states.⁵⁵ One delegate appeared from Pennsylvania, giving as justification for his appearance at a southern convention his desire to "further action on the improvement of the Ohio."⁵⁶ The time selected for the convention was unfortunate. Congress and several of the state legislatures were in session; in Europe the Crimean War was at its height, and these major attractions so completely overshadowed the convention that the newspapers gave it but little notice and generally relegated its affairs to the last page. The western rivers were low, and travel was difficult.⁵⁷ Senator Benton of Missouri had denounced the Charleston gathering as a "disunionist convention" and branded Pike's plan for a rail-

⁵² *Washington Daily Globe*, April 17, 1854; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854; *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian*, April 18, 1854; *DeBow's Review*, XVII, 205.

⁵³ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 181, quoting *New York Times*, December 15, 1854.

⁵⁴ Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XVIII, 356-60, 520-8, 623-35, 749-60; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 10-15, 1855; *Richmond Enquirer*, January 16, 19, 1855; *Charleston Courier*, January 17, 1855.

⁵⁵ Alabama 3, Arkansas 7, Georgia 1, Kentucky 1, Louisiana 158, Maryland 2, Mississippi 13, Pennsylvania 1, South Carolina 3, Tennessee 10, Texas 10, Virginia 2. Among them were James Robb and Judge Walker of Louisiana, John A. Quitman and N. D. Coleman of Mississippi, Albert Pike of Arkansas, Gen. Lamar of Texas, Wm. C. Dawson and J. H. Nesbit of Georgia, and C. G. Baylor, editor of the *Cotton Plant*, Washington City.

⁵⁶ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁵⁷ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

road as a plan for dissolving the Union;⁵⁸ and this served to discredit the movement in the eyes of the conservatives. But the chief reason for the failure of the convention was the attitude of New Orleans. That city had always been suspicious that plans for internal improvements would divert her trade to Charleston, Baltimore, or Mobile.⁵⁹ The city council was dilatory, and the committee on arrangements did but very little. The governor of Louisiana neglected to appoint delegates. Several of the New Orleans papers were either passive or frankly antagonistic.⁶⁰ "This feeling of indifference and apathy is not at all to be wondered at," says the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*. "All disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding, the series of Southern Commercial Conventions, commencing at Baltimore, and continued at Memphis and Charleston, were decidedly antagonistic to the interests of New Orleans; and this inimical tendency was more than once exhibited in a manner individually offensive and calculated to disturb and wound our amour propre."⁶¹ New Orleans felt especial umbrage because the Charleston Convention had refused to adopt resolutions requesting Congress for appropriations for the improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi.⁶²

A lively contest of words took place between several members of the convention and Judge Alexander Walker of New Orleans, in which the judge threw sneers at former conventions, and explained the reasons for New Orleans' attitude: "The convention (at Memphis) designed . . . to regulate the whole cotton business. . . . They treated the existence of New Orleans as fabulous as that of Tyre and Sidon. When I presented a resolution instructing Congress to grant appropriations for clearing the mouth of the Mississippi River, I was met by a resolution to clear out some river in Wisconsin. . . . If the city of New Orleans acted with a lukewarm spirit, it was owing

⁵⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 523; *Charleston Courier*, January 17, 1855.

⁵⁹ DeBow, himself a citizen of New Orleans, admits the charge and traces the unfriendly feeling of New Orleans toward the whole convention movement. *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 353-5.

⁶⁰ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 137, quoting *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 353; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 4, 1855. Cf. also *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 521, 752.

⁶¹ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 137, quoting *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 353; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 4, 1855; Cf. also *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 521, 752.

⁶² *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 628.

to previous hostilities of commercial conventions toward her interests."⁶³ Judge Walker then took a fling at Albert Pike, whose style was somewhat rhetorical, by suggesting that it would be for the reputation of the convention if it would omit "something of poetry and speculation, and deal more with matters of fact and statistics; if it would ignore the Euphrates, and devise means of continuing our railroads, and practically benefitting the South." To these remarks Captain Pike replied: "I make no pretensions to poetry. I was not born a poet, and have never succeeded in making myself one. I would, however, set myself up for comparison with the gentleman from New Orleans as to relative practical sense and ability. He would be the last individual I would judge to be endowed with great common sense. He is represented to be the head of every wild-goose scheme in the country."⁶⁴

Mr. N. D. Coleman replied to the charge that the Memphis Convention was hostile toward New Orleans. "He did not believe there was just cause for such an accusation. He did not believe there were any resolutions brought before that body, in which the interests of New Orleans were concerned, that were not properly reported and adopted by the convention."⁶⁵ This brought Judge Walker to his feet again. He declared that though he was "not eloquent himself, he had been the cause of eloquence in others. . . . (He did not) ascribe to the Memphis Convention the origin of the feeling of hostility toward New Orleans. That feeling originated at Baltimore. At Memphis he did not complain so much for what was done or what was not done as he did for the want of spirit of cordiality and good feeling which was manifested toward New Orleans. . . . Every movement in that body seemed to be aimed to undermine the city of New Orleans. . . . As to his general views about the convention, it was no doubt a fault of temperament that he differed from the gentleman in regard to the efficacy of resolutions and conventions to make railroads. He had attended some half dozen of these conventions, and he had yet to learn that they had ever started a single thing they had pronounced as

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

essential to our progress and prosperity." Referring to Mr. Pike, he said: "The issue was whether poetry was an efficient instrument wherewith to create railroads. It is true that the walls of some ancient city were raised to the soft breathing of the lute, and the walls of Jericho fell before the blasts of Joshua's trumpet; but those were musical times. Railroads have banished poetry and music from the whole world except Arkansas."⁶⁶

Such rude remarks and scant courtesy on the part of the city acting as host naturally put a damper on the proceedings, and the delegates finally left with the feeling that they had been anything but cordially received. The keenness of disappointment was increased by the fact that when the committees appointed at Charleston were called upon for reports, it was found that they had none to offer.⁶⁷

The most important question before the convention was the building of the Pacific Railroad. Albert Pike offered resolutions similar to those endorsed at Charleston,⁶⁸ but the convention modified the endorsements of the Charleston body by proposing that the national government should aid by the appropriation of public lands. Other questions on which resolutions were passed were direct trade with Europe, securing of the Tehuantepec route, deepening of southern harbors by the national government, education on southern principles, and the abolition of duties on railroad iron.⁶⁹ Two committees of three each were appointed to choose the time and place for the next meeting.⁷⁰

The next session of the Southern Commercial Convention met at Richmond, Va., from January 30 to February 3, 1856. This was also poorly attended, only seven states⁷¹ and the

⁶⁶ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 634-5. The entire passage is worth reading.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 357; *Charleston Courier*, January 17, 1855. Albert Pike remarked: "It cannot be expected that a commercial convention can produce any useful result when committees appointed by it pay no attention to subjects committed to them, after adjournment, and make no efforts to procure the necessary information on which to make a report to the next sitting of the convention." *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 524.

⁶⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, January 16, 1855; *Charleston Courier*, January 12, 17, 1855; *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 520-1.

⁶⁹ *Charleston Courier*, January 15-16, 1855. See proceedings.

⁷⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 760.

⁷¹ Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

District of Columbia being represented. Of the 213 delegates, 183 came from Virginia, leaving but 130 for the other six states combined.⁷² The small attendance was not occasioned by diminished interest, but because of the bad weather. An epidemic of small-pox in Richmond had caused one postponement of the meeting, and it had now assembled on short notice.⁷³ DeBow proposed that as many of the states were unrepresented, it would be better to adjourn until May.⁷⁴ But this proposition was defeated, and the convention proceeded to organize by electing General Tench Tilghman of Maryland president.⁷⁵

The chief topic of discussion was direct trade with Europe,⁷⁶ although resolutions were passed calling for a reduction of the tariff on railroad iron⁷⁷ and a release by southern legislatures of all license taxes on direct importations.⁷⁸ The need of a line of steamships from southern ports to Europe was also mentioned.⁷⁹ The railway to the Pacific by the southern route was endorsed as a matter of course and state legislatures petitioned for aid in its construction.⁸⁰ Before adjournment a committee of nine was appointed to address the southern people on behalf of the next meeting in December at Savannah.⁸¹

Accordingly 564 delegates gathered at Savannah on December 8, 1856, and remained in session until December 14.⁸² The large attendance was due to the political situation. An exciting

⁷² This is the number given by Davis, p. 182; and Russel, p. 137. Actual count in the register published in *DeBow's Review*, XX. 541-2, shows only 203 names distributed as follows: Texas 3, Louisiana 1, North Carolina 4, Maryland 5, Missouri 3, District of Columbia 14, Virginia 172, Tennessee 1. Among them were J. D. B. DeBow of Louisiana, D. W. Moseley, Myer Myers, and Senator R. Archer of Virginia, and Gen. A. W. Jackson of Tennessee. Gov. Wise of Virginia attended some of the sessions and the State legislature of Virginia adjourned their sessions to participate as visitors. *DeBow's Review*, XX. 352.

⁷³ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 340; *Richmond Enquirer*, February 1, 1856; *National Intelligencer*, February 1, 1856.

⁷⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 343-4; *National Intelligencer*, February 4, 1856.

⁷⁵ Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XX. 340-54; *Richmond Enquirer*, January 31, February 1, 2, 4, 5, 1856. Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 137, quotes the Resolutions in *Hunt's Magazine*, XXXIV. 392.

⁷⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 345, 348, 350.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350; *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1856.

⁷⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 351; *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1856.

⁷⁹ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 361; *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1856.

⁸⁰ *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1846.

⁸¹ *DeBow's Review*, XX. 351; *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1856. The call appears in *DeBow's Review*, XXI. 550-3.

⁸² Alabama 41, Florida 2, Georgia 206, Louisiana 6, Maryland 15, North Carolina 31, South Carolina 80, Tennessee 6, Texas 1, Virginia 176. Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 81-102; *Advertiser and State Gazette*, Montgomery, December 17, 1856.

election had just passed in which the "Black Republican" Party had been defeated, but the heavy vote polled by a "sectional" party which was frankly antagonistic to southern institutions aroused the South to a sense of peril.⁸³ The fire-eating element was gradually growing. Several of the members who had issued the call were known as disunionists. However, the *Savannah Republican*, a Union paper, thought that, "aside from the known character and sentiment of the men who compose the committee," there was nothing in the call that could be tortured into a disunion sentiment.⁸⁴ The conservative element in the South had come by this time to look upon the Southern Commercial Convention with distrust,⁸⁵ and the city council of Nashville refused to appoint delegates⁸⁶ to a body branded in advance as a disunion congress. As we have seen, New Orleans papers had been generally hostile to economic reform in the South, fearing it might injure the commercial growth of their own city. But it seemed likely that the Savannah Convention might discuss political questions, and on that ground the New Orleans periodicals, led by the *Delta*, gave it their hearty support.⁸⁷

The convention was composed largely of politicians. There was a feeling that, as a whole, it was "conservative," although the *Savannah Republican* admitted the presence of a considerable number of disunionists.⁸⁸ The mayor of Savannah⁸⁹ opened the meeting as temporary chairman. The permanent chairman, James Lyons of Virginia, in a conventional speech stated that the objects of the convention were to establish the commercial and not the political independence of the South. While he desired that the South should maintain the principles of a constitutional Union, at the same time he expressed the

⁸³ Russel, p. 138, quoting *Savannah Republican*, October 17, 21, 29, 1856.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138, quoting *Savannah Republican*, November 15, 1856.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138, quoting *Savannah Republican*, December 1, 1856; *National Intelligencer*, December 5, 1856, quoting *Savannah Republican*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138, quoting *Savannah Republican*, November 25, 1856.

⁸⁷ *Charleston Courier*, November 6, 1856.

⁸⁸ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 138, quoting *Savannah Republican*, December 16, 1856. See *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 82 ff for list of delegates.

⁸⁹ This much seems certain. The question is: who was the mayor? The *Charleston Courier* (December 9, 1856), gives the name Edward C. Anderson; while *DeBow's Review* (XXII. 81), calls him Dr. J. P. Scriven.

necessity of preparing for future emergencies and contingencies.⁹⁰ "The day may come," he said, "when the South may find that she will be driven to the necessity of exerting, and will have need and occasion for all her powers to preserve her rights and honor."⁹¹

Nearly all the subjects which had been brought before the convention in previous sessions were discussed.⁹² Two prominent topics were direct trade and the Pacific Railroad. Contrary to previous conventions, the assembly at Savannah declared that the national government had no power to construct a railroad, but that it might constitutionally aid its construction by the grant of lands.⁹³ Pike's plan as presented at New Orleans was once more endorsed.⁹⁴ In the interests of direct trade the convention endorsed the "A. Dudley Mann Scheme" to establish a "weekly ferry line of iron steamships of 20,000 tons burden" between Norfolk and Milford Haven, England.⁹⁵ Thomas Rainey's line of steamships between New York and the La Plata via Savannah met the approval of the convention.⁹⁶

Robert Toombs sent a letter proposing that state legislatures encourage direct trade by levying an ad valorem tax upon the sale of all goods except goods imported directly from foreign countries. "The power of the State government to tax without limit," he said, ". . . is clear, unquestioned and unquestionable. . . . A state cannot, under the Federal Constitution, lay duties on imports, but she can tax all imported commodities offered for sale within her limits. . . . Let us first secure direct trade. This can be done by imposing a State tax . . . upon all goods, wares, and merchandise offered for sale within the State, other than those which shall be imported from for-

⁹⁰ *Charleston Courier*, December 9, 1856.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, December 11, 1856; *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 86-7; Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 139, quoting *Savannah Republican*, December 9, 1856.

⁹² *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 81-105; *Charleston Courier*, December 11-13, 1856.

⁹³ *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 1856; *National Intelligencer*, December 12, 1856.

⁹⁴ *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 18, 1856; *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 99, 309-12.

⁹⁵ *Daily South Carolinian*, December 16, 1856; *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 18, 1856. For resolutions see *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 96-7; debates, *Ibid.*, pp. 207-9.

⁹⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 97; *Charleston Courier*, November 28, 1856, December 18, 1856.

oreign countries. . . . It should be high enough to raise sufficient revenue for all the wants of the State, without imposing upon the people any capitation or other direct tax whatever."⁹⁷ The committee on business did not report the Toombs plan, but resolutions in favor of free trade and direct taxation as measures best calculated to promote direct trade were recommended. The convention tabled this report by a vote of 57 to 24, and a committee was appointed to examine the question of free trade and direct taxation and report at the following session.⁹⁸ Other resolutions were passed concerning the publishing by the state and national governments of statistics concerning southern manufactures and mining, education,⁹⁹ and the Tehuantepec Railway.¹⁰⁰

But the chief interest of the Savannah Convention lay in political questions. Chief among these was the question of reopening the African slave trade.¹⁰¹ Governor Adams of South Carolina had brought the question to the fore in his address to the legislature of that state.¹⁰² On the second day of the convention, W. B. Goulden of Georgia introduced a resolution to repeal all laws interdicting the African slave trade. After being twice tabled¹⁰³ a resolution of investigation was presented¹⁰⁴ which was rejected only after a spirited debate.¹⁰⁵ The Kansas question came up for discussion and resulted

⁹⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 102-4; *Charleston Courier*, December 15, 1856.

⁹⁸ Resolutions: *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 102; *Charleston Courier*, December 13, 1856. For the debate see: *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 307-9; *Charleston Courier*, December 18, 1856.

⁹⁹ *Daily South Carolinian*, December 16, 1856. The special committee said: "The books rapidly coming into use in our schools and colleges at the South, are not only polluted with opinions and arguments adverse to our institutions and hostile to our constitutional views, but are inferior, in every respect, as books of instruction to those which might be produced amongst ourselves, or procured from Europe." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 104.

¹⁰⁰ *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 18, 1856; *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 98-100.

¹⁰¹ On the slave trade, see articles in *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 449-62; XXIII. 47-56.

¹⁰² *Charleston Courier*, November 26, December 1, 1856; *National Intelligencer*, December 6, 1856, quoting *Milledgeville Union* (Ga.).

¹⁰³ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 89, *National Intelligencer*, December 12, 1856.

¹⁰⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 92.

¹⁰⁵ *National Intelligencer*, December 12, 1856; *Charleston Courier*, December 12, 13, 15, 1856; *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 216-224. Participants in the debate were Messrs. Scott of Virginia, Pike of Louisiana, Cochran of Alabama, Callhoun of South Carolina, Baker of Alabama, Goulden of Georgia, Jones of Georgia, Spratt of South Carolina, Hunter of Virginia, Funsten of Virginia, Cropper of Virginia, Richardson of Maryland, Gholson of Virginia, Mason of Alabama, Kean of Virginia, McLeod of Texas, and Goulding of Virginia.

in the adoption of resolutions recommending counter-emigration to that territory.¹⁰⁶ Sympathy was expressed for the Walker filibuster in Central America.¹⁰⁷

The Savannah Convention is a landmark in the convention movement. Attempts had been made in previous conventions to discuss the annexation of Cuba, the Gadsden Purchase, and other problems which pertained to the realm of politics. But prior to this time debate on such questions had always been cut short by a motion to lay on the table or a remark from the chair that the question lay outside the scope of their jurisdiction. The convention at Savannah had no such scruples, and, as the remaining conventions followed its precedent, the Southern Commercial Convention tended to become less and less commercial, and more and more political, radical, and disunionist. It was because of the possible agitation of political questions that the *New York Times* took the stand which it did:

"The South should not be judged by Southern Conventions. The last Convention was meant for a fire-eaters' Convention, but turned out otherwise. It is believed that the masses in the South are conservative and if proper methods had been resorted to for election of delegates to the convention, different results would have come to pass."¹⁰⁸

The *National Intelligencer* quotes the *Baltimore American* as saying: "The general result, so far as can be gathered from

¹⁰⁶ "1. *Resolved*, That the security and honor of the South demands that she should maintain her equal rights in the Territories of the United States and that she ought to resist at every cost any attempt, wherever made, to exclude her from those Territories.

"2. *Resolved*, That the unprecedented efforts now being made by Northern people, through the instrumentality of emigrant aid societies, affords a startling evidence of the determination of our enemies to effect by indirect but most effective means the purpose of the Wilmot Proviso, to wall up the South within her present limits, and prevent the admission of any slaveholding State into this Union.

"3. *Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Convention counter emigration from the South is the most practical, peaceful, and effectual means of frustrating this free-soil scheme, and that the Convention most earnestly recommend to the people of the Southern States to organize plans promotive of Southern emigration to Kansas, and by every lawful means within their power to assist the settlement of Southern men therein." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 101.

¹⁰⁷ "*Resolved*, That the sympathies of this Convention are with the efforts being made to introduce civilization in the States of Central America, and to develop those rich and productive regions by the introduction of slave labor." See article on Nicaragua, *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 105-9. Nicaragua, of course, would be slave territory. The writer looks on Nicaragua as "a new state added to the South, in or out of the Union." The annexation of Nicaragua is to be an introduction to the annexation of all or a part of Mexico.

¹⁰⁸ Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-4, quoting *New York Times*, December 17, 1856.

the imperfect accounts at hand, does not strike us as affording any substantial promise of good to the South. Visionary and impracticable will be the verdict of the country inscribed against the majority of the resolutions adopted. . . . (The subjects) were generally of a theoretical, impractical character, and in the main related to questions which the convention would have been wise to let alone. Its proceedings seem to have been ruled by political experimenters rather than sound business men, and their effect will be as little productive of real good to the South as those that have preceded it in previous years."¹⁰⁹ The *New York Commercial Advertiser* declared in a somewhat similar strain: "Trade has laws which are beyond the control of passion or sentiment, and if our Southern friends and countrymen want to build more ships and more railroads, they must address themselves to the question whether these enterprises can be made to pay a good per centage on the capital invested. As long as gentlemen proceed upon the idea of gratifying political animosity—as long as their chief argument is 'There is a large party in the North hostile to our domestic institutions, let us build lines of steamers and more railroads, that we may avenge ourselves by taking away the business of the North'—so long will they be unsuccessful. The patriotic men of the country will have nothing to do with enterprises projected from party motives and the men of capital will have no confidence in them. But there is a wide margin for the development of the resources of the South, as there is for the development of the resources of the North and West; and if properly managed, this development can be so directed as to conduce to the general good of the whole Union."¹¹⁰

The Knoxville Convention met August 9, 1857.¹¹¹ It was yet more sectional than its predecessors. Sectionalism was the avowed purpose of the committee which issued the call: "Every other purpose is of trifling importance in comparison with the high moral and social objects of the Convention. They are

¹⁰⁹ *National Intelligencer*, December 16, 1856.

¹¹⁰ *Charleston Courier*, December 5, 1856, quoting *New York Commercial Advertiser*.

¹¹¹ Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 298-320; and *New York Herald*, August 17, 18, 19, 1857 (best report). Also *National Intelligencer*, August, 22, 1857.

intended to spread far and wide, correct, enlarged, and faithful views of our rights and obligations, and to unite us together by the most sacred bonds to maintain them inviolate for ourselves and our posterity.”¹¹² In point of attendance this convention ranked next to that of Charleston, 710 delegates being present from eleven states and Arizona Territory.¹¹³ J. D. B. DeBow, who by this time was an avowed disunionist, was made its president.¹¹⁴ He opened the session with a ringing disunion speech. He admitted that the convention built no railroads and established no steamship lines; but it caused the South to understand their importance. It taught the people that the South had “rights more to be valued and defended than any theories or sentiments about Union,” and “resources sufficient to make her important in the Union, or to enable her to maintain herself independently.”¹¹⁵

The Knoxville Convention, judging from the almost universal comments of the southern press, was a grave disappointment. The greater part of two days was spent debating a resolution to exclude the reporters of northern newspapers.¹¹⁶ No resolutions relative to internal improvements were adopted. The Pacific Railroad was not even mentioned. The chief topics were the reopening of the African slave trade and the revival of southern commerce.¹¹⁷ The convention did not directly put

¹¹² *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 193.

¹¹³ Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

¹¹⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 301.

¹¹⁵ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857. What Mr. DeBow actually said does not appear. A brief summary made by the secretaries is given in *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 301-2; and pages 225-38 of the same volume contain an article by Mr. DeBow which represented his sentiments at this time, and which he preferred to give out as his speech. What purports to be Mr. DeBow's speech is given in the *Charleston Courier*, August 17, 1857.

¹¹⁶ On the first day of the convention Mr. Mason of Alabama offered the following resolution:

“Resolved, That all editors and reporters of papers friendly to the objects of this Convention, and none other, be invited to take seats on this floor.”

This provoked a lively discussion during which Roger A. Pryor of Virginia spoke on the conduct of the northern press which a few months before was vilifying the South and her institutions and supporting Fremont for the presidency. He was opposed to placing the representatives of these papers on a position of equality with southern reporters. If they chose to report the proceedings of the convention they might do so; but he was opposed to paying them the compliment of inviting them to do it. After a great deal of further discussion, the following amendment of Mr. McRae of Mississippi was adopted:

“Resolved, That the members of the entire press of all the States of this Union, and of any other country, be admitted as reporters of the proceedings of this Convention.” *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 302-5; *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857; *Charleston Courier*, August 15, 17, 1857; *New York Herald*, August 17, 1857.

¹¹⁷ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857; *Charleston Courier*, August 17, 1857.

itself on record as favoring the reopening of the slave trade, and passed no resolutions concerning it save one of investigation;¹¹⁸ but indirectly it did much in the interest of the reopening of that trade. By a vote of 66 to 26, it favored the annulment of the article in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty providing for keeping a squadron of naval vessels off the coast of Africa for the suppression of the trade.¹¹⁹ At the same time an amendment offered by a Tennessee delegate (Mr. Sneed) declaring that it was "inexpedient and contrary to the settled policy of this country to repeal the laws prohibitory of the African Slave Trade," was defeated by a vote of 40 to 52.¹²⁰ That amendment was almost identical in language with a resolution introduced into the House of Representatives by James L. Orr of South Carolina (Dec. 15, 1856) and adopted with only eight dissenting votes.¹²¹ But radical as the convention was, the committee on business rejected the following: "*Resolved*, That the Convention recommend to the legislatures of the different states that they lay a tax upon all articles of merchandise used in Southern States, which are manufactured in States which refuse to support the Fugitive Slave Law."¹²²

A. Dudley Mann's scheme for the establishment of steamship lines between the Chesapeake and Milford Haven was debated but defeated, probably at the instigation of rival Virginia projects.¹²³ As a substitute the convention advocated the establishment of steamship lines from southern ports and called upon the states to aid in their establishment. The Federal Government was requested to grant to these lines, after they

¹¹⁸ "That this Convention is not possessed of information sufficient at the present time for proper action upon the question of reopening the African slave-trade, and that with a view to such information a committee consisting of one from each delegation present be appointed to collect information upon the condition of the African nation, upon the wants of the South in respect to population and labor, and to report the same to the next Convention, to be held at Montgomery, Alabama, in May next." *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 317.

¹¹⁹ *Tri-Weekly Carolinian*, August 15, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 310.

¹²⁰ *National Intelligencer*, August 18, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 309-10.

¹²¹ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 141, quoting *New York Herald*, August 19, 1857; *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, 3rd session, pp. 125-6.

¹²² *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857; *Tri-Weekly Carolina Times*, August 15, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 310.

¹²³ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 141, quoting *New York Herald*, August 17, 1857, and *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 306, 308. In the meantime the plan had been endorsed by a convention at Old Point Comfort, Virginia, and sixty-one shares of stock sold. *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 321-4.

were established, the same subsidies for carrying the mails as northern lines received.¹²⁴

A lengthy discussion resulted from the resolution of W. W. Boyce, of South Carolina, that the system of import duties should be abandoned and direct taxation substituted.¹²⁵ The establishment of free trade seemed as impossible as the reopening of the slave trade. In the end the convention recommended southern patronage of home manufactures and of merchants who imported directly from foreign countries.¹²⁶ The fortification and improvement of southern harbors¹²⁷ so as to make them coaling stations for government steamers was recommended. A more southern system of education and the establishment of an interstate printing house were the subjects of further resolutions.¹²⁸ Eight committees were appointed to carry out the work of the convention, one of which was for the purpose of memorializing Congress concerning the high duties imposed by foreign countries on American tobacco.¹²⁹ The American government had made an effort to have these duties modified in 1838-9, but it was met by a refusal on the part of European governments because no reciprocal concessions to foreign commerce were offered, American tariff duties being fixed by the tariff act of 1833. The period fixed by this act had now expired, and it was felt that an effort to reduce the rates might be successful.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857; *Charleston Courier*, August 17, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 311.

¹²⁵ *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 313 ff; *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857. See articles in *DeBow's Review*, XXVI. 1-27, 220-3, 353-6, 555-9.

¹²⁶ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857.

¹²⁷ Port Royal, S. C., Beaufort, N. C., and Mobile, Ala. *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 303, 307.

¹²⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 315, 316.

¹²⁹ (1) To memorialize Congress on the subject of the repeal of the fishery bounties; (2) to prepare and publish a call for the next meeting of the convention; (3) to memorialize Congress upon the repeal of tobacco duties in foreign ports; (4) to provide for southern school books; (5) to gather information on the comparative expense of selling cotton in the several southern cities; (6) to suggest suitable business for the next convention; (7) to consider the culture of the grape at the South; (8) to collect facts bearing on the reopening of the African slave-trade. *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 440.

¹³⁰ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 440; XXIV. 291-300.

IV

THE POLITICAL-COMMERCIAL CONVENTIONS

Strictly speaking, the convention at Knoxville was the last of the series of "commercial" conventions.¹ The introduction of political questions at Savannah and their continuation at Knoxville so influenced the two remaining conventions that they were more political than economic. At the same time the personnel of the conventions underwent a change. The earlier meetings contained men who represented a variety of interests—editors, preachers, physicians, professors, bankers, merchants, and men interested in railroads and steamship lines. In 1857 the register still showed a large number of names of professional men, but the representatives of business had largely ceased to attend, their place being taken by politicians. After the convention at Knoxville, the conservative element disappeared altogether. The last two sessions resolved themselves into conventions of disunionists who hoped to consolidate southern feeling and harmonize the local "differences between different quarters of the South."²

The address of the committee calling the Montgomery Convention of 1858 was a veritable bugle call marshalling all the forces of southern sentiment in opposition to northern aggression. Much could be quoted, but a few significant sentences are sufficient: "There is not only little ground to hope for the preservation of it (the Union), upon the basis and under the guarantees of the Constitution of 1787, but there is the most imminent danger of its entire destruction before many years shall have rolled by. . . . The alternatives presented to the South will be ruin, disgrace and bondage on the one hand, or independence of the persecutors and oppressors on the other. She will be compelled to assert her inalienable rights, and refuse longer submission to the laws of a perverted Union, pretended to be passed under a Constitution which has been not only desecrated, but destroyed."³ It is truly no wonder that the *Knoxville* (Tenn.) *Citizen* thought the call was "an invi-

¹ In fact the Knoxville Convention might also be classed as a "political" convention. *The Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* (August 15, 1857) comments: "The Convention has closed its political rather than commercial duties."

² Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 142, quoting *Charleston Mercury*, April 8, 1858.

³ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 424-8.

tation to take counsel whether the Union can be longer maintained or is worth maintaining."⁴

The Montgomery Convention (May 10-14, 1858) was well attended, about four hundred delegates assembling from ten states.⁵ Among the names on the register were A. P. Calhoun, L. W. Spratt, and Robert Barnwell Rhett, all of South Carolina, William Lowndes Yancey, T. B. Bethea, and C. T. Pollard of Alabama, Maunsel White and J. D. B. DeBow of Louisiana, J. W. Bridges of Tennessee, Roger A. Pryor and Edmund Ruffin of Virginia.⁶ William Lowndes Yancey delivered an address of welcome and made a prophecy amid roars of applause that before long some body would meet by which "your political relations shall be placed upon the basis of an independent sovereignty."⁷ A. P. Calhoun, son of John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, an ardent disunionist, was chosen president. Nor was this the only evidence of the temperment of this body. Edmund Ruffin, a Virginia secessionist, confides in his *Diary* that he found only two delegates outside of the Virginia delegation who were not in favor of secession.⁸ "A strong disunion sentiment is pervading the Convention," said the *Charleston Courier*.⁹ The *Montgomery Daily Confederation* said: "Every form and shape of political malcontent was there present, ready to assent in any project having for its end a dissolution of the Union, immediate, unconditional, final."¹⁰ The *Federal Union* of Milledgeville, Georgia, remarked: "When the South gets ready to dissolve the Union, all she has to do is to reassemble the Southern Commercial Convention which met at Montgomery and give the word."¹¹

The leading and almost only topic of discussion was the reopening of the African slave trade. The law forbidding that

⁴ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 142, quoting *Charleston Mercury*, April 20, 1858.

⁵ Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia. Proceedings in *DeBow's Review*, XXIV, 574-606; *Montgomery Daily Confederation*, May 11-15, 1858. Brief references in *Charleston Courier*, May 11-19, 1858.

⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV, 574-606.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 575; *Charleston Courier*, May 11, 1858.

⁸ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 143, quoting Ruffin's *Diary*, May 11, 1858.

⁹ *Charleston Courier*, May 14, 1858.

¹⁰ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 143, quoting *Montgomery Daily Confederation*, May 18, 1858.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143, quoting *New Orleans Picayune*, May 25, 1858.

traffic had been passed in 1807 and could be repealed only by Congress. Failing to secure the repeal, there was the alternative of secession. Thus a commercial convention was dealing wholly with a political issue. The debate hinged on a report in favor of reopening the trade, submitted by Mr. L. W. Spratt of South Carolina,¹² and proved that the delegates were hopelessly divided on the expediency of reopening the trade and upon whether agitation for its reopening would promote or injure the cause of disunion.¹³ Yancey of Alabama was the spokesman for those favoring the reopening of the trade. He claimed that any law prohibiting the slave trade was unconstitutional. The Constitution, he said, guaranteed slavery because it forbade Congress to interfere with it prior to 1808.¹⁴ When a law was passed in 1807 forbidding the importation of slaves after January 1, 1808, that law was unconstitutional because it discriminated against the South. It left the North free to import free labor in the shape of immigrants, but the labor supply of the South was shut off. Everybody granted that it was lawful to buy slaves for sale and take them to New Orleans providing they were not purchased in Africa, Brazil, or Cuba. That was a discrimination on the part of the federal statutes against the rest of the South in favor of Virginia, because it prevented them from buying slaves where they could obtain them cheapest. "If it is not wrong to hold slaves, and to buy them and sell them, it is right in morals, and under the Constitution which guarantees that institution, that we should buy them in whatever place we may choose to select. He did not wish to be compelled to go to Virginia and buy slaves for \$1500 each, when he could get them in Cuba for \$600, or upon the coast of Guinea for one-sixth of that sum. What has been the effect of this discrimination against the South? Our labor has increased from one million slaves at the Revolution to four millions. The North has had an average annual immigration of 350,000 and sometimes the immigration has reached 600,000 a year. They have been enabled to colonize our common terri-

¹² *Charleston Courier*, May 13, 1858; *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 473-91.

¹³ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 143, quoting *Charleston Mercury*, May 15, 1858.

¹⁴ "Congress shall enact no laws prohibiting the emigration and importation of such persons as the States now allow before the year 1808." Yancey's quotation.

tory, and now number *sixteen* States to our *fifteen*. And the great leader of free-soildom in the Senate of the United States, told us the other day that they would have *nineteen* States to our *fifteen*. In consequence of these discriminating laws, we are prohibited from populating the territory of this country, though it belong to us all in common."¹⁵

The other side of the argument was presented by Roger A. Pryor. He declared that the way for the South to increase its political power was to get white immigrants, and not to import slaves at great cost, which only counted for three-fifths in apportioning representation. He claimed that a dense population like that of the North meant the failure of the republican form of government; that an increase of labor for the cotton fields would bring about a decline in the price of cotton; that the enlargement of the basis of slavery would bring no advantage to the South or to the institution of slavery; that its diffusion, following an increased number of slaves by importation, would be an actual weakening of the institution. He thought that as long as the South was in the Union a law repealing the prohibition was impractical and unconstitutional.¹⁶

Mr. Robert G. Scott of Alabama did not agree with his colleague, Mr. Yancey. He held that the law prohibiting the slave trade was perfectly constitutional, derived from the power of Congress to regulate commerce with foreign nations. "Such had been the opinion of the framers of the Constitution; such was the opinion of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, and also of John C. Calhoun, who was a member of Monroe's cabinet when the act of 1820 was passed, declaring the slave-trade to be piracy."¹⁷ Henry W. Hilliard of Alabama took the same position. He read extracts from Elliott's *Debates* to show that the framers of the Constitution, Mr. Madison among the number, "were clearly of the opinion that the Constitution, by the clause conferring upon Congress power to regulate foreign commerce, gave to Congress power to pass laws for the prohibition of the African slave-trade. . . . As to the expediency of adopting the report . . . he thought it was not expedient at that

¹⁵ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV, 583-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 539-83.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 590-1.

time to ask Congress to repeal those laws. . . . The proposition before the Convention, if adopted, would be an invitation to every fanatic, to every one opposed to the institutions of the South, to agitate with a view to overthrowing those institutions. He was opposed to a policy here which most of its earnest advocates admit to be entirely impracticable. . . . He had no desire to outrage the moral sentiment of Christendom upon an impracticability. . . . He still had a great respect for the opinions of the Christian world."¹⁸

The report of the committee favoring the reopening of the slave trade was finally laid on the table to be taken up at the next meeting of the convention at Vicksburg.¹⁹ The convention considered resolutions favoring the establishment of Americans in Nicaragua²⁰ and warning the federal government against any further unlawful debarring of southerners from that region.²¹ It was proposed that it be declared unlawful for a citizen of any state to attempt to reopen the African slave trade while that state was in the Union,²² and a convention to discuss the serious political dangers of the South was also considered.²³ All were laid upon the table. A resolution, reported

¹⁸ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 591-2.

¹⁹ *National Intelligencer*, May 28, 1858.

²⁰ "Resolved, That we regard the establishment of the Americans in Nicaragua as a work of duty, no less than of honor and interest, on the part of the Southern people; and that this enterprise, tending as it does to the increase of Southern commerce and Southern power, is of paramount importance to all other questions now before the American people." *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 603.

²¹ "Resolved, That as the Southern States have, under the Constitution, equality of commercial rights and privileges with those of the North, the Federal Government is faithless to its engagements and oppressive in its operation when it attempts to suppress emigration to Central America from the South, while it permits it from the North; and that we deem it just and lawful to resist such an assumption of Federal power, and perversion of constitutional authority.

"Resolved, That we consider the Americans of Nicaragua as having been twice most grievously wronged by the Federal Government: first, by the act of Commander Davis at San Juan del Sur and Rivas, and recently by the utterly illegal and disgraceful conduct of Commodore Paulding at Punta Arenas; and that we believe that the people of the Southern States not only entirely repudiate these wrongs to their former countrymen, but also regard them as indirect insults to themselves; and we accordingly warn the Federal Government that a further persistence in such acts will not only render the Government odious to the people of the States and contemptible to foreign nations, but will most certainly dissolve the Union itself." *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 603.

²² "Resolved, That it is inexpedient for any State or its citizens to attempt to re-open the African slave-trade while that State is one of the United States of America." *Ibid.*, p. 605.

²³ "Resolved, That we recommend to the governors of the Southern States, or such of them as think with us, to call on the people of their respective States to elect delegates, equal to their representatives in Congress, to meet in convention at _____, on the first Monday in _____, to take into consideration the present critical position of the South and the dangers that threaten her in the future, and

by Mr. DeBow, that the federal government should repeal the fishing bounties was adopted.²⁴

The results of this convention, due to the schism created by the slave trade, were far from satisfactory. Edmund Ruffin confessed himself much disappointed by the turn matters took.²⁵ The press of South Carolina had been almost unanimous in recommending that delegates be sent to Montgomery, thinking thus to harmonize and consolidate the South. But the question of the slave trade had created a great deal of dissension, and the newspapers seem to have subjected the convention to heavy condemnation.²⁶

The last of the Southern Commercial Conventions gathered at Vicksburg, May 9, 1859 under the presidency of General Charles Clarke of Mississippi.²⁷ It was composed almost entirely of radicals. Only nine states were represented, some of them very meagerly.²⁸ The session lasted five days, four of which were spent in the discussion of the African slave trade.²⁹ After some preliminary skirmishing, the committee on resolutions presented the following: "*Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Convention, all laws, State or federal, prohibiting the African Slave Trade, ought to be repealed."³⁰ Two minority reports were presented: one by Mr. Delafield declaring the resolution impractical,³¹ the other by Mr. Humphreys who advocated the "apprentice system."³²

to endeavor to devise, if possible, effectual safeguards for her future security and equality in the Union; or, failing in that, to go out of it." *Ibid.*, p. 588; *National Intelligencer*, May 21, 1858.

²⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 597; *Charleston Courier*, May 19, 1858. For a full discussion of the question see *Charleston Courier*, May 22, 1858.

²⁵ Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 143, quoting Ruffin's *Diary*, May 11-16, 1858.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143, quoting *Montgomery Daily Confederation*, May 15, 1858, which is quoted of the Camden (S. C.) *Journal*.

²⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XXVI. 713.

²⁸ Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas were represented. *DeBow's Review*, XXVI. 713.

²⁹ Proceedings. *DeBow's Review*, XXVI. 713; XXVII. 94-103, 205-20, 360-5, 469-71; *New York Herald*, May 13, 21, 1859.

³⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XXVII. 96.

³¹ "*Resolved*, That without further discussion of the merits of this subject, it is inexpedient to take any action at this time, and especially in this Convention, for two reasons:

"1st. It is Utopian and impracticable to expect to obtain from Congress any repeal of the law, especially when a majority of the Southern States themselves have re-enacted equally stringent laws on this subject.

"2nd. This topic may be construed as the creation of new political issues for future party politics—an object believed to be foreign to the legitimate purposes for which this Convention is assembled." *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

The leaders in the debate for and against the slave trade were L. W. Spratt of South Carolina and Governor Foote of Mississippi. Spratt said that the border states were continually sending slaves into the West and lower South, and that free labor was gradually encroaching on slave territory. If more slaves were not procured, slave territory would be gradually crowded back and extinguished. He did not think there was any chance of securing the repeal of the federal law, but he counselled nullification of that law.³³ Governor Foote replied by saying that the reopening of the slave trade meant: (1) a reduction in the price of cotton, (2) consequently a reduction in the value of slaves, and (3) therefore their almost exclusive acquirement by capitalism. He declared that Mr. Spratt's method of reopening the slave trade was nothing short of treason, and charged Mr. Spratt with spreading treasonable sentiments in his speech. He advised adherence to the laws of the federal government which were the logical safeguards to the institution of slavery.³⁴ On a test vote Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas favored the resolution. Tennessee and Florida voted in opposition. South Carolina was equally divided. The measure was declared carried by a vote of 19 to 40.³⁵ Ten members of the convention then drew up a protest.³⁶ The president ruled that it could not be read. An appeal from the decision of the chair sustained that ruling. Thereupon Governor Foote and I. N. Patridge, editor of the Vicksburg *Whig*, resigned their seats and left the convention.³⁷

Other resolutions advocated the removal of obstructions at the mouth of the Mississippi River by the national government on the ground that the river was an "inland sea."³⁸ The convention endorsed the Pacific Railroad and called for national and state aid in building it. It expressed its approval of the pending establishment of permanent commercial relations between the southern Mississippi Valley and Belgium, provided

³³ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 205-14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-20. For other debates on this subject see *ibid.*, pp. 360-5, 468-70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XXVI. 713; XXVII. 99.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 470-1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

for a committee to consider education, and proposed measures for the more definite organization of the Southern Commercial Convention.³⁹ These consisted of the appointment by the state governors of three delegates from each congressional district and four from the state at large. One additional delegate was to be chosen for each election district by the county police and probate courts and the mayors of cities. The resolution further called for two standing committees: one a committee in each state to invite such citizens of other states as they saw fit; the other to look into the expediency of having delegates elected by the people.⁴⁰ On May 13 the convention adjourned to meet at Atlanta, Georgia, in November 1860.⁴¹ But the war intervened and the call was never issued.

The Vicksburg Convention was ridiculed and denounced by the Union element in the South, and distrusted even by the cooler headed disunionists. The vote on the slave trade showed clearly that the radical element was in control. But that was a subject on which the opinion of the South was by no means united, and many who favored disunion feared that the agitation of this subject might injure their cause. Their attitude was expressed by the *Montgomery Daily Confederation*: "These Southern Commercial Conventions have run their course, and we shall hear no more of them forever."⁴²

V

THE CONVENTIONS AND SOUTHERN IMPROVEMENT

The newspapers and economic journals of the ante-bellum period agree on one proposition: the existence of a "southern decline." Relying upon the strict interpretation of the Constitution, some of the southern states had refused to share in the funds spent by Congress for internal improvements.¹ The North was influenced by no such timidity, and the result was that much larger sums were expended in one section than in

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

⁴⁰ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁴¹ *DeBow's Review*, XXVI. 713.

⁴² *Montgomery Daily Confederation*, May 14, 1859. Quoted by Russel, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹ *Charleston Courier*, March 3, December, 4, 7, 9, 10, 1849; *Charleston Mercury*, November 27, 30, December 7, 1829.

the other. Over-production of cotton had resulted in decline in price. The cost of slaves was high, and without slave labor no individual of the ante-bellum South could hope to acquire wealth. The leaders of the conventions knew that their section lagged behind the North, and they sought to find the cause. The South, they said, must have her share of the government mon-
eys expended on internal improvements. Rivers must be dredged, port facilities improved, and railroads built. Then the South would secure a portion of the western trade which was enriching the northern seaboard cities. If a portion of their capital could be diverted to other channels, such as manufacturing and mining, over-production of cotton would cease and the price would return to its normal position. If cheaper and more extensive labor could be secured, the cost of producing cotton would be lessened. Northern agitators did not agree with this diagnosis. They found the cause of the "southern decline" in the existence of slavery which they attacked as a wasteful system of labor. This attack upon their institutions was keenly resented and was responsible for the plan to boycott northern colleges, summer resorts, and newspapers. But to succeed in this, the South must establish schools, watering places, and publications of its own. Thus another feature was added to the program. To secure these improvements in home conditions the leaders of the conventions addressed themselves.

A. Improvement of Transportation Facilities

The suggestion of internal improvements was mentioned for the first time in the third Augusta Convention (1838). The topic was mentioned again in the Charleston Convention (1839) but only as incidental to the idea of developing direct trade.² In none of the early conventions did this subject arouse more than passing notice.

Improvements in the aid of commerce assumed greater importance in the second series of conventions. The convention which met at New Orleans in 1845 was called solely for the purpose of discussing this question. The program laid down in its twenty resolutions dealt exclusively with this subject and

² *DeBow's Review*, IV. 355.

included: (1) improvement of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, (2) connecting the upper Mississippi with the Great Lakes by canal, (3) construction of railroads from the Mississippi Valley to the south Atlantic ports, (4) improvement of the mail service in the South and West, (5) improvement of the South Atlantic, Gulf, and Lake ports by the establishment of light-houses and military and naval defenses, (6) establishment in the South and West of shipyards, drydocks, armories, foundries, and marine hospitals, (7) building of levees along the Mississippi, and (8) construction of a military road through Arkansas to the Indian frontier—all to be done by or at the expense of the federal government.³ Six years later the New Orleans Convention adopted an extensive plan of railroad development for the southern states,⁴ but it refused to consider improvements in aid of navigation lest its railroad program be injured.⁵

The Baltimore Convention of 1852 went on record as favoring the development of commerce.⁶ It congratulated the city of Baltimore on the completion of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and appointed a committee to ascertain the freight rates on this line with a view to making Baltimore the commercial capital of the South.⁷ The Memphis Convention of 1853 urged Congress to deepen the channels at the mouth of the Mississippi, improve the Des Moines and Rock River Rapids, and improve the harbors of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, Baltimore, and Richmond.⁸ A number of resolutions were adopted at Charleston (1854) but they were not definite.⁹

³ *Ibid.*, I. 18-20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XII. 315.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XII. 317.

⁶ *Resolved*, "That the Atlantic Cities and States of the South are on the great natural highways of commerce—the Gulf Stream—and those States should improve the facilities offered by nature by resorting to all the aids of science and art." *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 373.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁸ "And, *whereas*, a similar report has been made by boards of engineers appointed by the government of the United States, which show the entire practicability of improving the harbors of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, Baltimore, and Richmond, and the estimate by them prepared for these purposes do not involve any very large outlay of money:

"*Therefore, Resolved*, That this Convention also urge upon Congress speedy attention to these eminently meritorious claims upon the United States." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 263-4.

⁹ *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 637-8.

A perfect flood of resolutions relating to internal improvements appeared in the New Orleans Convention of 1855. They demanded the fortification and improvement of Galveston harbor, Matagorda Bay, and the Red River; improvements around the Falls of the Ohio River at Louisville, Ky., removal of obstructions at the mouth of the Mississippi, construction of navy yards at New Orleans and Memphis, harbor improvements at Mobile, a ship canal between the Mississippi River and Lake Borgne (ten miles below New Orleans) and another across Florida, and general extension of railroads in the South and Southwest.¹⁰

The Richmond Convention (1856) omitted all reference to the matter. The Savannah Convention (1856) recommended to the state legislatures of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas the completion of railway lines through these states to connect with the proposed Pacific Railroad.¹¹ It also urged Kentucky to connect Louisville with the Cumberland Gap.¹²

The Knoxville Convention (1857) confined itself to recommending the fortification and improvement of Mobile, Port Royal, S. C., and Beaufort, N. C., so as to make them coaling stations for government steamers.¹³ The Montgomery Convention (1858) made no recommendations on this subject, and the sole action of Vicksburg (1859) lay in a single resolution "That it is the deliberate opinion of this Convention that the Federal Government ought forthwith to make such appropriations as may be necessary to remove obstructions at the mouth of the Mississippi River."¹⁴

From this survey it would seem that the greatest interest in internal improvements was felt in the conventions of 1845, 1851, and 1855. The specific things asked for were railroad and harbor improvements. This corresponds to the great period of

¹⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 358, 360, 527, 528, 749, 750, 751, 760.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, XXII. 93.

¹² "Resolved, That in view of the importance of connecting at the earliest period the waters of the Chesapeake Bay with those of the Ohio and Mississippi, it be urged upon the Legislature of Kentucky to complete the remaining link by constructing a railroad from the city of Louisville to the Cumberland Gap, to meet the improvements of the State of Virginia." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, XXIV.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 98-9.

railroad building throughout the entire country. New Orleans, Charleston, Baltimore, and Mobile were all extending their iron arms to the Mississippi and Ohio in order to tap the growing commerce of the West and Northwest which they saw going off to New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. They felt that the wealth of those cities was due in large part to the profits made in this traffic, and they desired these profits to accrue to the benefit of the South. If there were no other data there would be no justification for the formation of an unfavorable opinion. Friendly rivalry is not disunionism. But one has only to peruse the debates of the conventions of this period to find that the rivalry was not friendly. Northern energy and enterprise had built the necessary railroads. Northern cities were already reaping huge profits from the western trade; and disappointment, bitterness, and jealousy were all too manifest.

B. Development of Manufactures and Mining in the South

The earliest reference to this subject appeared in the Memphis Convention of 1853, which passed a resolution providing for the publication of data relative to the ability of the South to manufacture its own cotton.¹⁵ The Charleston Convention, which met the next year, passed resolutions favoring greater diversification of industry,¹⁶ and appointed two committees whose duties were outlined in detail. It was proposed that one

¹⁵ "Whereas it is believed that (cotton) can be (manufactured) with extraordinary cheapness on or near the fields of its growth, therefore—

"Be it resolved, That the President of this Convention appoint a committee of five members, who shall be requested to prepare for publication and distribution, particularly in the manufacturing districts of Europe, a full report of the peculiar facilities offered by the Southern and Western States for the manufacture of cotton, and that this report be published as a part of the proceedings of this Convention." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 268, 271, 274. The committee appointed consisted of Hamilton Smith, S. D. Morgan, W. Gregg, C. G. Baylor, and A. Fowler. The last three at least were able men.

¹⁶ "Resolved, That whilst agriculture is, and properly should be, the predominant pursuit of the people of the States represented in this Convention, the interests of these States would be very greatly promoted by the employment of capital in other pursuits and especially in manufactures and mining; that the abundance and cheapness of the means of subsistence, of fuel and water power, the temperature of the climate, and other natural advantages, will, if properly improved, secure to these States a virtual monopoly of the manufacture as well as the growth of cotton; that it is believed the present cost of transporting this staple abroad, will more than cover the expense of manufacturing it at home; and that, as an investment, for security, for certainty of result and uniformity of income, the factory and the mine, when properly managed, have no superior." *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 635.

of these committees should gather all kinds of information relative to the manufactures and mines already in operation in the South. The other committee was "to consider and report upon the propriety and expediency of adopting some plan for promoting Southern and Western manufactures and mining operations."¹⁷ The resolutions of 1855 were silent on the diversification of southern industry and the Richmond Convention (1856) did nothing save to resolve: "That it is expedient that Southern manufactures should in all cases be used, when they can be procured on as advantageous terms as Northern manufactures."¹⁸ Both the Savannah¹⁹ (1856) and Knoxville²⁰ gatherings passed resolutions; and the meeting at Vicksburg (1859) appointed a committee of five "to report to the next Commercial Convention the best and most effectual means of developing the manufacturing resources of the South, and their influence upon Southern prosperity, politically, socially, and pecuniarily."²¹

In this connection, one sees again the influence of the Cotton Kingdom. Practically all of the articles which the South used were of European or northern manufacture. Somebody received the profit for those manufactured articles. It would be well to keep that profit in the South, but in order to do that money would have to be invested in other lines of industry than land and slaves. The conventions therefore resolved that manufacturing could be done in the South, recommended the southern people to purchase southern goods in preference to northern goods "when they can be procured on as advantageous terms," and appointed numerous committees to collect statistical information and report. This information would doubtless have been valuable, but there is no record that the committees ever reported. The work of the convention on this point was

¹⁷ *DeBow's Review*, pp. 635-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XX. 351.

¹⁹ "Resolved, That appropriate measures should be taken, if not by the General Government, at least by the Legislatures of the cotton planting States, to obtain and publish all the facts that will throw light on the relative advantages of Southern and Western localities for carrying on this branch of manufactures and showing where all the elements that enter into the cotton fabric would be brought and combined with the vast expenditure of capital and labor." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 98.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 316.

²¹ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 102.

intended to be purely one of investigation. No definite scheme to aid in diversifying industry was ever put forth. On this point the debates do not seem to have been bitter.

C. Southern Agriculture and the Slave Trade

In their addresses the presidents of the conventions speak of southern agriculture and of the slave trade. But southern agriculture was carried on by means of slavery, and practically the only action taken by any of the conventions for the benefit of agriculture was the agitation to reopen the African slave trade that agriculture might have more laborers. Thus we may treat "southern agriculture" and the "slave trade" as synonymous.

This question developed rather late in the convention movement, the first reference to the slave trade being a resolution of W. B. Goulden of Georgia in the Savannah Convention (1856) to the effect "That our Representatives in Congress be requested further, to use their best efforts to procure a repeal of all the laws interdicting the African slave trade, as also to procure a treaty to be made which will secure the delivery of fugitive slaves from the authorities of Canada upon the demand of their owners."²² After being twice tabled, Mr. Scott of Virginia introduced a resolution "That the President of this Convention appoint a Committee to investigate all the facts connected with the present condition and future prospects of slavery in the United States, and other parts of the world, and the character and extent of those international laws upon the subject of the African slave trade, and the propriety of re-opening that trade by the United States with the coast of Africa, and report the same to the next Convention."²³ Although rejected by a vote of 24 to 61,²⁴ the resolution appears in the published resolutions of the convention.²⁵

The Convention which met at Knoxville devoted a goodly portion of its time to the consideration of the slave trade. It favored the annulment of those provisions of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty by which an American fleet was kept off the

²² *Ibid.*, XXII. 89.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

coast of Africa for the suppression of the trade.²⁶ An amendment declaring that it was "inexpedient and contrary to the settled policy of this country to repeal the laws prohibitory of the African Slave Trade" was defeated by a vote of 40 to 52.²⁷ The convention finished its work by appointing a committee "to collect facts bearing upon the reopening of the African slave-trade, to be presented at the next session of the Convention."²⁸

This committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. L. W. Spratt of South Carolina, submitted an elaborate report²⁹ to the Montgomery Convention which occupied almost the entire time of that body. In the course of the debate Mr. Yancey read a report embodying his views and concluded with a resolution "That the laws of Congress prohibiting the foreign-slave trade ought to be repealed."³⁰ Substitute motions were offered by Robert G. Scott³¹ of Alabama and Mr. Kimbro³² of Georgia. The convention ended by tabling the motion and substitutes, deciding to refer them to the meeting at Vicksburg the following year.

The day after the reopening of the Vicksburg Convention, Mr. Spratt called up the report³³ containing his three resolutions. Colonel I. M. Patridge of Vicksburg attempted to prevent the discussion of a subject which had divided three conventions by a resolution "That it is inexpedient at this time to discuss the question of the revival of the African slave trade."³⁴ The chair ruled him out of order. Colonel I. N. Davis then offered the following as a substitute: "Resolved, That the laws

²⁶ *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian*, August 15, 1857.

²⁷ *National Intelligencer*, August 18, 1857; *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 309-10.

²⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 578.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 473-91; *Charleston Courier*, May 13, 1858. This report embodied the following series of resolutions:

"1. *Resolved*, That slavery is right, and that being right, there can be no wrong in the natural means to its formation.

"2. *Resolved*, That it is expedient and proper the foreign slave trade should be re-opened, and that this Convention will lend its influence to any legitimate measure to that end.

"3. *Resolved*, That a committee consisting of one from each slave State, be appointed to consider the means, consistent with the duty and obligations of these States, for re-opening the foreign slave trade, and that they report their plan to the next meeting of the Convention."

³⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 583.

³¹ "That it is inexpedient for this Convention to take any action upon the subject of re-opening the foreign African slave-trade either by recommending a repeal of the existing laws, or otherwise." *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 589.

³² "*Resolved*, That it is inexpedient for any State, or its citizens, to attempt to re-open the African slave-trade while that State is one of the United States of America." *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 605.

³³ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 96.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

of Congress against the African slave trade should be repealed.”³⁵ Mr. Delafield and Mr. Humphreys presented two minority reports, the former declaring the reopening of the trade to be impracticable and foreign to the purposes of the convention; and the latter advocating instead the introduction of negroes on the apprentice system.³⁶ At length the vote was taken and resulted in the passage of Johnson’s majority report by a vote of 40 to 19.³⁷ Colonel Patridge offered to read a protest signed by ten members declaring that the resolution did not embody the sentiment of the people of the states represented, and that the convention was in the highest degree impolitic in passing such a resolution in the absence of representatives from Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and North Carolina. “We furthermore protest against said action, because we believe, judging from the arguments used on this floor in support of said resolution, that it owes its origin to influences hostile to the peace and perpetuity of the Union, antagonistic to the Constitution and laws of the land, and unpropitious to the future happiness and prosperity of the Republic. It has been mainly sustained in this body by avowed disunionists, and the leading speeches made in support of it have been replete with disunion sentiments, denunciatory of the government and laws of the Union, and counselling the South to armed and bloody opposition to the constituted authorities of the nation.”³⁸ When halted in the reading of this document, Patridge and Governor Foote resigned their seats and withdrew. Further resolutions were offered withdrawing the United States fleet from the coast of Africa,³⁹ and appointing a committee to investigate the apprentice system.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 470-1.

³⁹ “*Resolved*, That in consideration of the very great expense of maintaining a fleet on the coast of Africa, it being in aid of an act of Congress declaring the slave trade piracy, and its jeopardizing the friendly relations between England and America on the subjects of the right of visitation and search, this Convention, as the last did, urges upon the General Government, the propriety of giving notice, at the earliest possible moment, to England, according to the provisions of the treaty with that power of its intention to withdraw our fleet and of the abrogation of the treaty.” *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁰ “*Resolved*, That a committee of five be appointed to report to the next Convention upon the legality and expediency of the African apprentice system.” *Ibid.*, 100.

A survey of these data reveal several interesting facts: (1) there was no agitation in the conventions for the reopening of the slave trade until 1856; (2) the conventions of Savannah, Knoxville, and Montgomery (1856-1858) took no action save to appoint committees to investigate, and to table their resolutions and reports; (3) the Vicksburg Convention (1859) pronounced in favor of reopening the traffic, expressed a desire to withdraw the fleet from the African coast, and appointed a committee to consider the apprentice system; (4) a protest by a minority of their number was suppressed.

It is by no means certain that the Vicksburg Convention represented the sentiment of the South on this subject. Indeed, judging from the action of three successive bodies prior to 1859, it did not represent southern sentiment. The question had been called to the attention of the legislatures of both South Carolina and Louisiana, although no action was taken in either. Yet it is undeniable that there was a considerable sentiment in some parts of the South favoring a reopening of the slave trade. For several years the *Charleston Mercury* had been carrying on a campaign of propaganda and almost open smuggling was going on in Charleston and other southern ports. Now why did any part of the South desire the reopening of this traffic? Once more the answer lies in the ideals of the Cotton Kingdom.

The planting class of the South produced about two-thirds of the world's supply of cotton. As long as the price remained normal, production elsewhere was stimulated. But with additional labor the price would become lower, and a monopoly of production might possibly be obtained. Economic gain was one motive back of the agitation to reopen the slave trade. The other reason was a desire for political power. The North was superior in population. The northern section had long held the advantage in the House of Representatives, and since 1850 there had been a northern majority of two in the Senate as well. With the control of both houses of Congress permanently in the hands of the North, the South might be excluded from vacant territory; she would be compelled to play a minor rôle in government; she might even have the chagrin of witnessing the election of a "Black Republican" President. But the re-

vival of the slave trade would tend to restore the South to political power. Slaves counted three-fifths in securing representation in the lower house of Congress. Additional slaves would enable the South to extend the circle of slave states. It was contended that the chief reason for southern failure in Kansas had been a lack of slaves. By greatly increasing the number of slaves, the masters could emigrate with their human chattels and perhaps still make Kansas a slave state. Another slave state might be carved out of western Texas. They might secure Arizona, New Mexico, and Lower California. There seemed to be no reason why slave labor could not be used to advantage on the wheat fields of the West. If slaves could be made cheap enough they might be carried into Nebraska, Utah and Oregon. But that was not all. The boundaries of the United States must be extended. There was ample opportunity. Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Mosquito would make valuable slave territory. Possibly Hayti and at least parts of Mexico could be added. But this plan could not be carried out unless slaves were made sufficiently cheap and numerous. At prices then prevailing, and with the numbers then in the United States, such a program of expansion was impossible. Without expansion the Cotton Kingdom could not control the government. For these reasons the agitation for reopening the prohibited traffic was inevitable. As many of the Vicksburg Convention had no hope that Congress would pass the desired law, disunion sentiments were loudly and freely expressed.

D. A Southern System of Education for Southern Youth

The name of C. K. Marshall of Mississippi frequently occurs in connection with this idea. A great deal might be quoted, but the following words taken from his Charleston speech in 1854 are a fair statement of his position: "These States are purchasing thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of school books annually that are got up, printed and published in other sections of this country, not well adapted to our latitudes, not always teaching the doctrines of philanthropy and Providence, on which we rest for support, defence

and responsibility.”⁴¹ Two years later Mr. Marshall wrote to the Savannah Convention: “The entire education of our children *at home*, and the provision of *suitable works* therefor, is the only true safeguard for the protection of the educational interests of the South, and in thus guarding the threshold we may preserve the citidel. Our citizens have for years together, lavished their wealth by unknown thousands upon institutions and faculties who esteem it a condescension to teach Southern pupils, and spurn their parents and guardians as graceless barbarians. But the South has at last recognized the delicate hint, and set herself to the work of reforming these reproachful abuses. Southern youth must be educated at home. Self-respect, parental love, economy, health, the claims of the coming years, all imperatively demand it. But if we use abolition textbooks at home, we might as well send the pupils to the land where the books originated. We can, and we must print, publish, and teach our own books.”⁴²

This type of propaganda was successful in securing some kind of recognition in nearly all the conventions. Most of their resolutions show a desire to establish a uniform system of school books written by southern men.⁴³ The New Orleans Convention of 1855 asked the legislature of Louisiana to appropriate \$1000 annually to be used as prizes to encourage

⁴¹ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, XXII. 312-13.

⁴³ Compare the following:

(From Memphis, 1853) “*Resolved*, That this Convention earnestly recommends to the citizens of the States here represented, the education of their youth at home as far as practicable; the employment of native teachers in their schools and colleges; the encouragement of a home press; the publication of books adapted to the educational wants and social conditions of these States, and the encouragement and support of inventions and discoveries in the arts and sciences, by their citizens.” *DeBow's Review*, XV. 268.

(From Charleston, 1854) “*Resolved*, That this Convention respectfully recommends to the legislatures of these States the importance of encouraging the production, by their own citizens, scholars, printers, publishers, of such school books as may be necessary for elementary and general education by the offer of suitable prizes for the best books of different classes, to be decided by appropriate committees appointed to judge of their merits; such books always to be printed and published within the Southern and Southwestern States. . . .

“2. That the Convention recommends to the legislatures and citizens of the Southern States, the ample endowment of Universities, Colleges, and other scholastic institutions, for the purpose of extending their advantages and usefulness; and it also respectfully solicits the visitors and Boards of Trustees for such institutions of learning, to discriminate in the election of all professors and other teachers in favor of Southern talent and education.” *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 638-9.

(From Richmond, 1856) “*Resolved*, That Southern men should patronize Southern Literary Institutions, and use books published at the South, when they can be procured.” *DeBow's Review*, XX. 351.

writers of southern school books.⁴⁴ The Savannah Convention went so far as to appoint a committee to prepare a series of texts,⁴⁵ and this committee was continued and enlarged at Knoxville.⁴⁶ The Memphis (1853), Charleston (1854),⁴⁷ and Savannah (1856)⁴⁸ Conventions wished to secure the education of southern pupils in southern colleges. Charleston desired the establishment of normal schools for the training of teachers.⁴⁹ Savannah recommended the displacement of northern by southern newspapers and magazines.⁵⁰ Augusta⁵¹ (1838) and Charleston⁵² (1854) were interested in commercial education. Knoxville⁵³ (1857) and Vicksburg⁵⁴ (1859) desired to establish a southern publishing house.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 751.

⁴⁵ The committee consisted of Professors Bledsoe and McGuffey of the University of Virginia, President Smith of Randolph-Macon College, Virginia, Hon. Geo. E. Badger, Dr. Lacey, and D. L. Swain of North Carolina, Right Rev. Bishop Elliott, J. Hamilton Cooper, Alonzo Church, and President Talmadge of Georgia, Ashbell Smith of Texas, President Longstreet of Mississippi, Dr. Garland of Alabama, Charles Gayarre of Louisiana, and Dr. Richard Fuller of Maryland. *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 100.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 315.

⁴⁷ "Inasmuch as the cause of education is of the first importance amongst growing and enlightened States, and the proper instruction and training of the rising generations in the Southern and Southwestern States demand our especial care and attention, therefore—*Resolved*, That this Convention earnestly recommends all parents and guardians within these States to consider well that, to neglect the claims of their own seminaries and colleges, and patronize and enrich those of remoter States, is fraught with peril to our sacred interests, perpetuating our dependence on those who do not understand and cannot appreciate our necessities and responsibilities, and at the same time fixing a lasting reproach upon our own institutions, teachers, and people." *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 638-9.

⁴⁸ Identical resolutions. *Ibid.*, XXII. 100.

⁴⁹ "*Resolved*, That amongst the most important measures necessary to the success of our educational interests is the establishment by the Southern and Southwestern States of normal schools for the free admission to such persons, of both sexes, as may wish to devote themselves to the profession of teaching within their bodies; and this Convention respectfully solicits the attention of the governors and legislatures of these States to the importance of this subject." *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 638-9.

⁵⁰ "1. *Resolved*, That if the habit of subscribing to Northern journals be adhered to by our people, it becomes them at least to encourage such only as prove themselves conservative in their character, and in no respect allied with the enemies of our rights and institutions.

"2. *Resolved*, That it is the duty of the Southern people to give earnest encouragement to the several literary and industrial periodicals now established in their midst, and to withdraw their support from such as are published in the Northern States inimical to our rights." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 100.

⁵¹ "This Convention cannot but view with deep regret the neglect of all commercial pursuits which has hitherto prevailed among the youth of our country, and which has necessarily thrown its most important interests into the hands of those who, by feeling and habit, are led into commercial connections elsewhere. This Convention, therefore, cannot too earnestly recommend the speedy adoption by all their fellow-citizens of measures to introduce commercial education among our youth; to train them up in the habits of business, and thereby to establish a body of merchants whose every interest and feeling shall be centered in the country which has reared and sustained them." *DeBow's Review*, XIII. 478-9.

⁵² Resolutions identical. *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 638.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 316.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 102.

What was the origin of this hostility toward northern text-books, colleges, newspapers and magazines? Again we believe that it started with the propagandists of the Cotton Kingdom. Northern text-books, northern newspapers, and northern magazines were written primarily for northern consumption. They made no definite attempt to handle problems that were particularly southern. Northern texts were not usually favorable to the "peculiar institution" of the South. Teachers in northern schools and colleges, though not necessarily abolitionists, saw the economic and social dangers of the institution of slavery, to say nothing of its inconsistency with the principles of democracy as they understood them. Northern newspapers and magazines were not necessarily as rabid as the *Liberator*, but most of them refused to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law or to sanction the raids of Missourians in Kansas. The North, for the most part, was willing that the South should hold slaves, but it objected to helping the slave catcher hunt them on northern soil. Most northerners wished to be neutral on the subject of slavery so long as they themselves were not threatened. But neutrality was not what the southern propagandists desired in the 'fifties. The leaders of the Cotton Kingdom were expansionists. They judged books and periodicals, not by the evil which they said, but by the good which they did not say as well. By 1850 they demanded that their institution of slavery be praised. The most learned men of the South—college professors, ministers, judges, statesmen—all believed fervently in the institution of slavery, wrote pamphlets and magazine articles to prove that the negro was unfit for freedom and consequently better off in bondage. They demanded that northern literature, if it sought entry into the South, should conform to their standards. They desired to censor the school books, excluding all which did not preach the desired doctrine. They demanded the support of the church, and barred all clergymen who denied the divine establishment of slavery. They appealed to the colleges, and removed all professors who refused to support the institution economically, socially, and politically. They were willing to muzzle the press and censor the mails if necessary, but they were determined to exclude everything that had the taint of abolitionism.

Thus, by the extension of southern railways, the propagandists would secure southern commerce for southern lines; by aiding manufactures in the South, they would secure southern profits for southern business concerns and keep their capital at home; by reopening the slave traffic they could control the cotton market and make their political position secure; by controlling education they could implant their ideas in the rising generation. The composite result would be to make the Cotton Kingdom secure and supreme at home.

VI

THE CONVENTIONS AND FOREIGN COMMERCE

In colonial times nearly all of the trade between Europe and America was carried on by way of the West Indies. Here the ships took a fresh start and sailed northward along the Atlantic Coast. This enabled southern merchants to import their goods directly. But in the 'twenties it was found that by dipping a thermometer overboard the captain could tell when he reached the Gulf Stream and was enabled to ascertain with some degree of accuracy his latitude and longitude. This enabled the navigator to dispense with the aid of the trade winds and shorten the voyage by sailing directly across the Atlantic to northern cities. The development of "thermal navigation" and the enterprise of New York business men resulted in the establishment of packet lines running between New York and Liverpool. Ships sailed on a regular schedule, and every effort was made to have them arrive promptly at their destination. Slowly but surely southern commerce fell off. Imports came to be made indirectly through New York and other northern cities; and importers, steamship lines, commission houses, and insurance companies located in the North reaped fabulous profits. This economic dependence was keenly felt throughout the South. Indeed, it was with a view to ending this dependence that the first commercial conventions were called into being. They desired to secure capital for the establishment of packet lines between European ports and the cities of the South. There was also some agitation for a lowering of the tariff or a complete abandonment of the protective policy. As the movement progressed the value of

trade connections with South America and the Orient was seen, and attempts to secure these connections took definite form. The first might be secured by packet lines; the second by a railroad to the Pacific or a canal across Nicaragua, Panama, or Tehuantepec. These problems of the conventions must next be considered.

A. Direct Trade with Europe and South America

The first series of four conventions (1837-1839) dealt almost solely with this problem. They desired the investment of additional capital in commercial enterprise, and advocated and secured legislation looking thereto by the legalizing of limited co-partnerships. They advocated, and to a considerable extent secured, the coöperation of banking institutions. But the necessary capital and enterprise were lacking, and they did not succeed in establishing regular lines of packet boats plying between southern and European ports.

Following the Charleston Convention of 1839 the direct trade project languished, and did not reappear until the Memphis Convention of 1853. That gathering put itself on record in the following words: "*Resolved*, That this convention regards the establishment of a direct communication by steam between our Southern ports and Europe, and the encouragement and protection of this system by the national government, connecting therewith ample mail facilities, as a necessary feature in the commercial independence of the South and West."¹ But by the next year there seemed to be less hope of national aid. The editor of the *Richmond Enquirer* wrote: "We can assure all parties that nothing is to be hoped from the federal government. . . . The hand of the federal government has been laid upon Virginia commerce only to oppress and crush. As it has been in the past, so in all probability will it be in the future."²

A letter from J. H. Siebels, U. S. chargé d'affaires at Brussels, was read at Charleston (1854) calling attention to the enormous sums annually paid to Liverpool for "receiving

¹ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 263.

² *Richmond Enquirer*, April 7, 1854.

and forwarding." He observed that a continental port was of the utmost importance, and suggested Antwerp.³ Evidently something should be done, and, as the federal government showed no signs of action, the South must do it herself. The Charleston Convention passed resolutions proposing that the southern states should encourage direct trade by exempting imported goods from taxation or by paying a drawback to the importer. It appointed committees to inquire into the need of establishing steamship lines from southern ports, and urged southern delegates in Congress to vote for contracts authorizing those lines, when established, to transport foreign mails.⁴

The New Orleans Convention of 1855 also advocated the establishment of steamship lines from southern to European ports and demanded that the national government should grant them their just share of the foreign mails.⁵ The Richmond Convention (1856) adopted similar resolutions⁶ and appointed a committee to memorialize the "southern and southwestern Legislatures to unite with the State of Virginia in the formation of a line or lines of Atlantic steamers, to ply between Hampton Roads and other ports of the south to Europe."⁷ The following was added for the benefit of the national government: "*Resolved*, That the Senators and Representatives from the southern and southwestern States be requested to vote for no law granting appropriations in aid of ocean mail lines termi-

³ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 250-1.

⁴ "*Resolved*, That this Convention recommend to each of the Southern States having a seaport to encourage the establishment of a direct trade with Europe, either by exempting from taxes for a limited time, the goods imported, or by allowing the importers an equivalent drawback or bounty, or by such other mode as to the Legislatures or the respective States may seem best.

"*Resolved*, That a committee consisting of two members from each seaport represented in this convention, be appointed for purpose of inquiring into the expediency of establishing a line of steamships between one or more of said ports and certain port or ports in Europe, with liberty to act during the recess of the convention. . . .

"*Resolved*, That the Southern delegates in the Congress of the United States be requested to urge the passage of an act authorizing the transportation of the United States Mail in said steamships, with such compensation as has heretofore been allowed to other steam lines for similar services." *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 640-1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 360.

⁶ "*Whereas*, This Convention deems it indispensable to the successful progress of southern commerce that a line or lines of first class steamers be established between a port or ports of the south to some port or ports in Europe, and therefore,

"*Resolved*, That we earnestly recommend the Southern and Southwestern States to unite in the establishment of such a line or lines, and that the delegates from those States to the convention be requested to call the attention of these representative legislatures to the importance of this subject and urge their coöperation." *DeBow's Review*, XX. 351.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XX. 351.

nating at any northern port, without the insertion of a clause binding the government to extend like aid to a line or lines that may hereafter be established between ports of the southern States and foreign ports."⁸

About this time considerable interest was aroused by A. Dudley Mann's scheme for a steam ferry line.⁹ Mann proposed to incorporate a company with a capital stock of \$50,000,000 for the purpose of establishing a "steam ferry" between some port on the Chesapeake (probably Norfolk) and Milford Haven, England—a small harbor near Liverpool. The "ferry" was to be composed of iron steamships of about 20,000 tons each which would make weekly trips across the Atlantic.¹⁰ To facilitate his scheme, Mann advocated the concentration of railroads on the Chesapeake, especially the roads in the South and Middle West.¹¹ This would turn the export trade of the Ohio and upper Mississippi Valley to some Chesapeake port and cut off one of the chief elements of New York's strength.¹² Representatives of the railroad companies met at Bristol, Tenn., in June, 1857, and selected a committee of three to lay the matter before the chambers of commerce in Liverpool, Manchester, and London.¹³ In the meantime, Mann obtained a charter from the Virginia Legislature.¹⁴ In March, 1858, subscription books were opened and stock was being sold at \$100

⁸ *DeBow's Review*, p. 348.

⁹ "The Steam Ferry line to Europe from the Chesapeake," by A. Dudley Mann, *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 440 ff; "Two Letters on the Southern Steamship Line," by Lieut. Maury and Joseph Segar, *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 513-17; "Southern Enterprise—Line of Steamships from Norfolk to Europe," by B. T. Archer, *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 125-7; "Southern Steamship Line," *Ibid.*, XXIII. 321-4; Barney, "Southern Steam Marine," *Ibid.*, pp. 415-418.

¹⁰ "Four such vessels in point of size as the *Leviathan*, leaving each side of the Atlantic weekly would convey 2,000,000 tons of cargo per annum. Three hundred sailing vessels of a thousand tons each would not have the capacity to perform such a service. The economy in building, running, equipping, and all else, of the latter over the former would be fully fifty per cent. A cargo of 25,000 bales of cotton would be received aboard or discharged in three days. The gross receipts for the voyage or a passage out and a passage in, may be safely estimated on an average at \$200,000 or \$10,400,000 per annum. The steamships, constructed entirely of iron, would probably be seaworthy for one hundred years, and then in value be worth half their original cost. As it is tolerable certain that they could be made reliably sea proof and fire proof, insurance would be measurably dispensed with; and including wear and tear, they could be probably run at a cost not exceeding \$7,000,000 per annum, when fairly established." "Atlantic Steam Ferry Company," by A. Dudley Mann, *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. Cf. 352.

¹¹ Proceedings of Steamship Convention at Old Point Comfort, Va., 1857, *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, XXIV. 353.

¹³ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 86.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 375.

per share. No one was allowed to subscribe for more than one share of stock for the first six months, the idea being that every one who wished to do so might have a part in this public demonstration in favor of southern economic independence.¹⁵ The northern press claimed that there was not sufficient traffic for the success of such a line and, even if there were, that the financial resources of any city on the Chesapeake would be inadequate.¹⁶ But the southern papers were confident. The *Norfolk American* said: "The valley of the Ohio has four times the produce necessary to load a weekly line of mammoth steamers; the Virginia water line can transport three times as much as this weekly line would require; and the average saving of freight over this line would be nearly one-third of the cost of the rival routes."¹⁷ It was said that in 1856 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had conveyed 955,000 barrels of flour to tidewater despite the prophecy made ten years previously that the line could not sustain itself.¹⁸ At that time railroads were under construction between Chesapeake ports and the interior cities of Memphis and Montgomery. The commerce of Louisville would be conveyed to the Chesapeake by way of the Lexington and Big Sandy Railway, while Cincinnati would utilize the Covington and Central Railroad, and perhaps even Chicago's trade could be secured. "The three cities named," said Mann, "will alone furnish ample freight for the four ocean mammoths. . . . This ligament of iron will bind Ohio, and Illinois, and Indiana inseparably to the South, to say nothing of Pennsylvania, whose great central artery flows in the direction in which her interests lie."¹⁹ The Savannah Convention (1856) endorsed Mann's plan, and the Knoxville Convention (1857) passed resolutions²⁰ recommending the plan to the people of the southern states.

While expressing approval of these measures, the Vicksburg Convention (1859) gave notice that something had been accomplished in another quarter. Negotiations had been carried

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

¹⁶ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 440.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 440-1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 308.

on between the cities of the Mississippi Valley and the Belgian municipal authorities of Ghent and Antwerp. A ship was soon to arrive. New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Vicksburg, Memphis, and St. Louis were urged to make the visit a success.²¹

It is probably not too much to say that on the subject of direct trade, the Southern Commercial Conventions were more unanimous than on other issues. For a long time they had agitated the question, calling attention to the increasing wealth which the North was drawing from the South. The Cotton Kingdom desired the retention of this wealth within its own borders. As the years progressed, the debates grew more and more bitter and the southern attitude toward northern business became more and more hostile. The steam ferry line was a practical way of carrying out a plan to link the South with Europe and, through railroads, to link the Northwest with the South.²² By 1859 much had been accomplished. Trade relations had been established with a foreign country, whereas there had been none before. Stock for a \$50,000,000 line was on sale. A second line from New Orleans to France was in process of organization and had already made application to Congress for mail service.²³

In the early 'fifties a great deal of interest developed in the possibilities of the Amazon trade. In 1850 a war occurred between Brazil and Paraguay over the right to navigate the La Plata, which has its source in Brazil but flows entirely through the territory of Paraguay at its mouth. The United States proposed to mediate between the two powers in order to obtain for Brazil the right of free navigation. She would then be in a position to demand of Brazil the free navigation of the Amazon, after having secured from Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador,

²¹ *DeBow's Review*, XXVII. 99, 100, 101, 102.

²² The third resolution of the Richmond Convention gives a good idea of the full extent of southern ambitions:

"*Resolved*, That in the opinion of this convention the steam ferry line when established will effect an entire revolution in the traffic of the world, in which the slaveholding States will be the principal beneficiaries, and that it will carry at no distant day the mails, passengers, the gold and silver, and the less ponderous articles of merchandise from Australia, China, the East Indies, Japan, the South and Central American States, Mexico, the West Indies, and California to Great Britain, France, Germany, and other European countries, thus affording lucrative employment to the railroads, and increasing value thereby to the property of the South." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 96-7.

²³ "Ocean Steamers from New Orleans to France," *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 318-20.

Venezuela, and New Granada ports of entry. At least, this was the way in which Brazil viewed the situation, and she resolved to thwart the ambition of this "nation of pirates."²⁴ She redoubled her efforts and brought the war with Paraguay to a successful conclusion. Envoys were sent with all speed to Peru and Bolivia to treat for exclusive right to navigate their Amazon streams, granting them in return the exclusive right to navigate the Amazon in Brazilian territory. The envoys met with success in Peru but failed in Bolivia.

Under the Peruvian treaty, Brazil and Peru each pledged itself to donate \$20,000 to start a steamship line. Peru paid the money and Brazil entered into a contract (1852) with Souza, one of her own subjects, by which Souza was given a monopoly of steam navigation on the Amazon for a period of thirty years between the mouth of the Rio Negro and Nauta.²⁵ But Brazil had missed her reckoning. Three months before the Brazil-Peruvian treaty, Randolph Clay had negotiated a treaty between Peru and the United States.²⁶ Article X of that treaty stated: "The Republic of Peru . . . hereby engages to accord to any citizen or citizens of the United States, who may establish a line of steam vessels, to navigate regularly between the different ports of entry within Peruvian territory, the same privileges . . . and all other favors enjoyed by any association of company whatsoever." The third article stated that "the two high contracting parties hereby bind and engage themselves not to grant any favors, privilege, or immunity whatever, in matters of commerce and navigation, to other nations which shall not be also immediately extended to the citizens of the other contracting party, who shall enjoy the same gratuitously, if the concession shall have been gratuitous, or on giving a compensation, as nearly as possible of proportionate value and effect, to be adjusted by mutual agreement if the concession shall have been conditional." It was argued that by this article the United States inherited all the privileges conferred upon Brazil. By the second article of this treaty,

²⁴ *Observer*, Brazil, October 23, 1852; quoted in *DeBow's Review*, XV. 263.

²⁵ *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 136-42. The proposed route went through 1500 miles of Brazilian waters and covered about 250 miles of Peruvian territory.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 136 ff.

"The citizens of either republic may frequent with their vessels all the coasts, ports and places of the other, wherever foreign commerce is permitted." Foreign commerce was permitted at Nauta, which was on the Peruvian "coast," and the vessels of the United States had a right to frequent it. But they were unable to reach this port without going through the mouth of the Amazon and traversing hundreds of miles of Brazilian territory.²⁷ Bolivia also had granted the United States free navigation of her part of the Amazon valley, and constituted two of her river towns free ports; and at least two of the other upper Amazon countries were ready to grant similar concessions.

The Amazon situation was brought to the attention of the Baltimore Convention by Lieutenant M. F. Maury. Maury contended that America needed Brazil for a cotton market. "Brazil and her rulers have shut out the world from the Amazon for the last 300 years, neither using it herself nor permitting others to use it," he said. . . . "These five republics²⁸ have the right to follow their navigable waters to the sea. . . . They are weak and cannot enforce their rights. But they are ready to give them to us."²⁹ The Amazon question also assumed considerable importance in the Memphis Convention (1853). Bishop James H. Otey and Dr. C. T. Quintard of Tennessee were the leading advocates of the "open valley" policy.³⁰ During the discussion the Bishop's views were somewhat modified by the more conservative element;

²⁷ *DeBow's Review*, XIV. 142-3.

²⁸ Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, New Grenada, and Venezuela are all drained by the Amazon.

²⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, December 24, 1852.

³⁰ Otey offered a series of resolutions of which the following are a part:

"1. *Resolved*, That the free navigation of the Amazon is one of the most important questions of the age, and its accomplishment worthy of the best efforts of American statesmen. . . .

"3. *Resolved*, That the interests of commerce, the cause of civilization, and the mandates of high heaven require the Atlantic slopes of South America be *subdued and replenished*. That the river steamer and the free navigation of the Amazon are the principal levers by which that part of the world is to be raised up to the abode of a great, prosperous, and happy people. That, impressed with the importance of such a consummation not only to this country and to all the states of Christendom, but to the happy solution also of the great problem of human progress through the world, therefore, we, the people of the Mississippi Valley and of the Atlantic slopes of North America, represented in the Convention think fit to declare, that in our judgment the free navigation of the Amazon is the greatest boon that a commercial people can claim of the diplomacy of the age, and that we would be glad to see such a boon obtained peaceably at any price that it becomes a great nation to offer." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 263.

but it is not difficult to detect the appeal to "manifest destiny" in the resolutions as finally passed.³¹

While there was no opposition at Memphis, a considerable amount developed at Charleston. The opening of the Amazon was declared to be a political question, the recommendation of which would encourage filibustering. Despite the able arguments of Lieutenants Maury and Herndon, the convention at Charleston was conservative and contented itself with the passage of two resolutions urging Congress to make explorations and to establish mail connections with Brazilian ports.³² The wording of these resolutions makes it evident that the convention did not desire to commit any act affecting Brazilian sovereignty.

The Savannah Convention passed a resolution which, though not directly connected with the Amazon, did have reference to southern steam connection with South America. Thomas Rainey and others had formed the North and South American Steamship Company for the purpose of running a line of steamers from New York to the West Indies, Brazil and the La Plata. Savannah was to be the last city touched before proceeding to the West Indies, and the first one touched upon the return to the United States. Rainey had made application to Congress for an appropriation to transport the United States mails from the Atlantic seaboard to the South American

³¹ "Resolved, That this Convention highly approves the steps which have been taken by the United States Government to obtain the fullest information in respect to the countries bounding the Orinoco, Amazon, and La Plata rivers, with a view to opening up the trade of that vast region to American enterprise; and the Senators and Representatives in Congress, from the States represented in this Convention, are respectfully requested to use all proper means, by the establishment of mail steamers from the port of New Orleans, to suitable points on the South American continent (or in such other mode as may be deemed most expedient) to secure to the people of the United States the advantages of trade and intercourse with the regions referred to.

"Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention, Lieutenant Maury deserves the thanks of the American people, for the able manner in which he has advocated the proposed project of uniting by the ties of commerce and common interest, the great valley of the Mississippi with the tropical countries of our sister continent, and we trust his efforts will not be relaxed until the great end in view is fully consummated." *DeBow's Review*, XV. 268. The first lines of these resolutions refer to an exploring expedition sent to the upper waters of the Amazon by way of Peru.

³² "3. To send one or two small steamers up the Amazon for the purpose of exploring the tributaries of that river, which the States owning them have declared to be free to the commerce and navigation of the whole world; and that the government of Brazil be requested to permit these vessels to make explorations and surveys upon the shores of the Amazon, or some other port of Brazil.

"4. To encourage the establishment of a line of mail steamers between some Southern port or ports, and the mouth of the Amazon or some other port of Brazil." *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 640.

ports. Since much of the stock was owned in Savannah, the convention sensed in this line an opportunity for direct communication with South America and "*Resolved*, That this convention respectfully and earnestly recommend this subject to the favorable consideration of Congress."³³

The area of the Amazon Valley embraced about 2,000,000 square miles. The wealth of the region was incalculable. The western portion of it contained immense quantities of precious metals and diamond fields. The mines of Potosi, which had yielded \$1,600,000,000 of silver, were lying idle, not because they were exhausted but because of lack of machinery. Here was a field which had not been exploited, and there was a splendid opportunity for the South if only communication could be established. The South wished the Amazon Valley for a cotton market, and the wealth which could be made out of its commerce. In 1853, in exchange for four yards of cotton cloth in the interior of Peru, one could secure as much drugs as he could purchase in New York for \$40 or \$50. Para, the Brazilian port at the mouth of the Amazon, had a commerce valued at \$3,000,000 a year although no steamer had yet plied the great river beyond. It was no wonder that Maury exclaimed: "Give the world now the free navigation of the Amazon, and let the expedition to Japan be as successful as it may. Before our commerce shall amount to \$10,000,000 with that distant and exclusive people, Amazonia will be pouring out its hundreds of millions here at our doors."³⁴ Lastly, the South wanted the Amazon trade because of slavery. Nearly all of its remarkably fertile soil was fitted for slave labor. Southern communication with Brazil would result in slavery being extended thither, and Brazil would become an extended South whither the surplus of African population could be sent. "The eye of the far seeing statesman cannot fail to perceive in that wilderness and in that fact the safety valve of this Union."³⁵

³³ *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 96-7.

³⁴ *Charleston Courier*, December 23, 1852; *National Intelligencer*, June 13, 1853.

³⁵ *Charleston Courier*, December 23, 1852; *National Intelligencer*, December 20, 1852.

B. The Tariff

The subject of the tariff had for many years been a tender one in the South, and it is somewhat surprising to find that it does not occupy a more prominent position among the other topics treated in convention resolutions. In a letter to the Charleston Convention of 1854, Mr. DeBow called attention to a situation which was greatly retarding the development of southern railways:

"The railroad system of the country is increasing at the rate of 2000 miles per annum and at the present duty will pay yearly into the national treasury \$6,000,000 without conferring any material benefit upon the iron interests, for whom this duty was intended, who are confessedly able to supply but a small portion of the demand, and whom, if they were able, the facts satisfactorily prove, have in this particular little or nothing to fear from foreign competition. Under a repeal of the duty in 1832 heavy imports on iron were made for the benefit of railroad companies in the old States, and now it would seem but fair that the new States, in the infancy of their population, and in the paucity of their capital, should enjoy a like advantage—an advantage which will eventually be felt in every section of the Union."³⁶

Whether influenced by this letter or not, the writer does not pretend to know, but both the Charleston³⁷ and the Richmond Conventions³⁸ passed resolutions calling for the reduction or abandonment of duty on this article. Both the Savannah³⁹

³⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 96.

³⁷ "Resolved, That this Convention recommend to the government of the United States the formation of treaties with foreign governments for the admission of their respective products at reduced rates of duty." *DeBow's Review*, XVII. 641.

³⁸ "Whereas, under the existing tariff laws of the United States, a duty of 30% is levied on the article of railroad iron imported into this country from abroad; and whereas it has been for some time past the settled practice of the government to adjust the duties on imposts to the revenue standard, and it being now apparent, from the annual report of the Secretary of Treasury, that a large surplus, derived from duties on foreign commerce, has accumulated in the treasury beyond the wants and expenses of the government; and whereas, the successful and economical prosecution of the railroad system in the United States is seriously embarrassed by the present heavy and unnecessary taxation of railroad iron imported from foreign countries, whence alone inadequate supplies are obtained on cheaper terms, even with the freight added, than the domestic can furnish; therefore,

"Resolved, That it is the decided opinion of this convention that the said duties on railroad iron ought to be repealed, or greatly reduced." *DeBow's Review*, XX. 350.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XXII. 307-9.

and Knoxville⁴⁰ Conventions debated the advisability of repealing the tariff duties and substituting a system of direct taxation. In the Knoxville Convention the subject had been introduced by Judge Jones of Georgia, and at Vicksburg the Judge offered a resolution condemning the tariff as injurious to the South.⁴¹ Although this resolution did not pass, it probably represented southern feeling.

The protective tariff system was opposed by the South because the South was not a manufacturing center. Practically all manufactured articles were purchased, either from the North or from Europe. If the goods were purchased from Europe, the added tariff brought the price to a higher level than was absolutely necessary. If the goods were purchased from the North, the price was artificially raised, for the northern manufacturer relied on "protection" and sold his article at a figure just below that at which the European goods could be sold after paying the duty. In either case the South paid a heavy bill. Considering these facts the South had a real grievance. Although railroad iron is specifically mentioned, they desired to get rid of the tariff altogether.

In a letter to the Savannah Convention, Senator Toombs suggested that the best way to promote direct trade was to make it cheaper to import directly into the South than indirectly through the North. This could be done in two ways; the states might levy a heavy tax on goods imported indirectly, or they might pay a drawback to the southern importer.⁴² In either case the preference of trade would be in favor of the southern importer. The *New York Times* remarked: "The scheme cannot work, for it is simply proposing that the Southern people voluntarily tax themselves to buy goods abroad,

⁴⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 313-14.

⁴¹ "Whereas, The Constitution was ordained to establish justice, and to secure the blessings of liberty to us and our posterity;

"And Whereas, the system of collecting revenue by duties on imports, is unequal and unjust between the two sections of the Union, and between the rich and the poor, and tends to manifest corruption of the government, which has always proved the grave of freedom;

"And Whereas, the tariff system combined with the manner of the expenditures of the Federal Government has operated and must operate to the distraction of Southern Commerce, and to the injury of all commerce; therefore

"Resolved; That the tariff system ought to be abolished, and revenue collected to support the Government by direct taxes." *DeBow's Review*, XXVII. 96.

⁴² Letter from Toombs to Anderson, *Ibid.*, XXII. 102.

which is not the cheapest market.”⁴³ The *Times* spoke the truth, but did not tell the whole story. To buy goods from abroad would be to seek the cheapest market had not the protective tariff artificially created the price in favor of northern manufacturers. Here, once more, the North benefitted at southern expense, and the result was a feeling of bitterness and jealousy.

C. Connection of the South With the Pacific

This could be secured in two ways: by a Pacific Railroad, or by a ship canal or railroad across Mexico or Central America. The South desired both routes.

The question came up for the first time in the convention of 1849, where the construction of a Pacific Railroad was thought to be the best method by which newly acquired California could be linked with the South.⁴⁴ The same thought recurred in the convention of 1851 and occupied a large portion of the time of that body. Reference to it was made at Baltimore in 1852 but no definite recommendation was made.⁴⁵ The Memphis resolutions of 1853 were vague, stating only that the Pacific Railroad was desirable and that it was the duty of the federal government to render aid.⁴⁶ As originally introduced they suggested that the national government should build at least one trunk line, but this was stricken out.⁴⁷

The Charleston Convention of 1854 took much more definite ground. Albert Pike of Arkansas was the advocate of a plan calling for the granting of a charter by the legislature of Virginia to a corporation composed of the separate states, cities, private corporations, and individuals. Each state was to take at least \$2,000,000 worth of stock and was to be represented equally on the board of directors. The Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw nations, and the State of California were to be given an opportunity to join if they desired. The road was to extend through Mexican territory, and the question of right of way was to be arranged with the Mexican government by the south-

⁴³ *New York Times*, December 17, 1856.

⁴⁴ *DeBow's Review*, VIII. 299; *Charleston Courier*, October 30, 1849.

⁴⁵ *National Intelligencer*, December 30, 1852; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 24, 1852.

⁴⁶ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 267.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

ern states acting as a corporation, the power to negotiate with foreign nations having been granted in the charter.⁴⁸ Lieutenant M. F. Maury presented a rival plan by which the government was to construct a double track line to the Pacific as a measure of national defense. The rolling stock was to be operated by private individuals, but the government was to keep up the "public thoroughfare" and regulate the movement of trains. In discussion, though not in resolution, the Charleston Convention repudiated national government aid. Pike denounced it in his speeches with the most vehement eloquence. The convention went wild and his speech was punctuated with "rapturous applause." His plan was unanimously adopted.

The New Orleans Convention called for national aid and adopted the resolutions of the Charleston meeting.⁴⁹ The Savannah Convention adopted the New Orleans resolutions in substance,⁵⁰ while the convention at Vicksburg went back to the views of Memphis which were more definite in that they called on both the state legislatures and Congress for aid.⁵¹

Probably the Pacific Railroad did more than any other single idea to brand the convention in the eyes of practical men as a group of visionaries. Newspapers, North and South, declared that the plans of the Charleston Convention were unsound. The *New York Times* said: "His (Pike's) plan for raising money is impracticable, and as regards amount, \$28,000,000, insufficient. He would find more capital in New York City and Philadelphia than among the Indians and Mexicans."⁵² "We regard the Pacific Railroad as a chimera," said the *Richmond Enquirer*, "and we are not particularly anxious to tempt the government to undertake the hopeless task of its construction."⁵³ The *Charleston Mercury* ridiculed the plan in this language: "As a commercial project the Atlantic States have scarcely an appreciable interest in a railroad to the Pacific, and they are coming every day more generally to feel that this is the case. . . . The route to California by the Isthmus of

⁴⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XVI. 636-7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 520.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XXII. 99.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 101.

⁵² *New York Times*, April 25, 1854.

⁵³ *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854.

Tehuantepec promises greater advantages and attracts much more earnest attention. . . . Coming down to one route—which shall it be? The extreme northern route, surveyed by Gen. Stevens, it is said is practicable—for Polar bears and their next of kin. The Convention is not likely to ride on that rail. The next is Whitney's route, to which Col. Benton objects, that it will be covered up half the year by snow, and the other half by sand. The Southern route is declared by the same authority so desolate that a wolf could not make a living on it. He recommends one on which that able and sagacious explorer, Col. Fremont, with a company of seasoned pioneers, has barely escaped destruction by cold and starvation in two successive attempts to pass the mountains. In short, the friends of each route, declare the other impracticable or absurd. As things stand at present, they are probably all right."⁵⁴

The other connection with the Pacific was by railroad or canal across Mexico or Central America. There were four possible routes: Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Tehuantepec.⁵⁵ At Memphis (1853) attention was called to the ease with which a railroad could be constructed and the federal government was urged to expedite negotiations by which the desired right of way might be secured.⁵⁶ The New Orleans Convention (1855) decided definitely in favor of the Tehuantepec route and passed resolutions asking the southern states to extend all possible aid to secure the success of this enterprise.⁵⁷

On February 5, 1853, Mexico made a contract with A. G. Sloo and others, incorporated in Louisiana, by which a right of way for a plank road and railroad were secured. Frequent revolutions in Mexico created a lack of confidence in the Mexican government and hindered work on the road. By the Gadsden Treaty the protection of the United States was extended over the contract. The Savannah Convention approved the project and urged the United States government to enter into contracts for carrying the mails with the Tehuantepec Com-

⁵⁴ *Charleston Mercury*, quoted by *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 1854.

⁵⁵ For comparison of the various routes, see *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 365 ff.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, XV. 267.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 751.

pany.⁵⁸ The value of the Tehuantepec route to the Cotton Kingdom can be easily seen from the following table of distances to the Pacific via the various routes.⁵⁹

	Miles via Cape Horn	Miles via Panama	Miles via Nicaragua	Miles via Tehuantepec
England to				
San Francisco.....	3,624	7,502	7,041	6,671
New York to				
San Francisco.....	14,194	4,992	4,531	3,804
New Orleans to				
San Francisco.....	14,314	4,505	3,767	2,704

The length of the proposed route was 166 miles, and the cost of construction, including equipment, was estimated at \$7,847,900. The company proposed to furnish weekly mail service at the rate of \$750,000 per annum. It was further estimated that 100,000 passengers would use the route going to and from California. At \$25 each the income from this source alone would be \$2,500,000 which would enable the company to make a net gain of at least \$1,000,000 to say nothing of the proposed \$750,000 contract for mail service.⁶⁰ This profit would accrue to a southern company.

VII

THE CONVENTIONS AND DISUNION SENTIMENT

The plans of the Cotton Kingdom propagandists for increased commerce were ambitious, but they were not achieved. As one beautiful castle after another seemed about to tumble under the hand of its architect, a feeling of hostility arose. At first the leaders professed loyalty and love for the Union, but threatened its destruction if they were allowed to remain in it on their own terms. At the same time a feeling arose that the South was a distinct nationality with its own interests, institutions, and ideals; and that political as well as economic inde-

⁵⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XXIII. 96, 99. The government paid \$737,750 for carrying the mails twice a month from New York to San Francisco, a distance that took twenty-five days to traverse. The Tehuantepec Company proposed to transport the mails from New Orleans to San Francisco in thirteen days, four times a month for \$750,000. Connection could be made between New York and New Orleans in three and one-half days, thus putting New York within sixteen and one-half days of San Francisco and New Orleans within thirteen days of San Francisco, instead of twenty-one days as before. *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 195.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, XXII. 194.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

pendence was desirable. Through each succeeding convention the "Hymn of Hate" grew louder and more fantastic until at last practically all of the leaders regarded the breakup of the Union as only a matter of time. To support this claim let us view statements made in the different conventions, not by some insignificant planters, but by the leaders—the men who framed the projects, debated, and promoted them.

The data for the earlier conventions is not at hand in sufficient quantity to justify a statement. The direct trade conventions of 1837-1839 did call attention to the profits made by northern cities and suggested that it would be better to keep these profits in the South, but no statement from any leader has been found which would justify the conclusion that there was any hostile sentiment at this time. Similarly, the three internal improvement conventions of 1845, 1849, and 1851 were conservative. They were seeking to connect western commerce with southern cities by means of railway lines. It seemed as though Congress might construct the Pacific Railroad and dredge the Mississippi, thus assisting southern commerce. The struggle for trade in this period impresses the writer as being a keen but friendly rivalry. DeBow was writing inflammatory articles in his magazine in 1851,¹ but we do not find any marked bitterness of feeling in the convention of that year. Governor Moulton, the presiding officer, said nothing in his short speech which one could construe as sectional or disloyal.² Colonel Tarpley, Judge Mills, James Robb, and J. D. B. DeBow spoke, but their talk dealt with railroads and was not incendiary. Only once did Mr. Robb call attention to the unpleasantness that had divided North and South the year before. He said: "Latterly, there has sprung up, in consequence of the slavery agitation, an uneasy feeling. The wicked and insane meddling of the enemies of our institutions, of our peace and tranquility, and the perpetual discussion of the question, North and South, contributes largely to unsettle confidence, and to work on the fears of the timid. I am not among

¹ *Ibid.*, X. 107.

² *Ibid.*, XII. 307-8 Reference is to the New Orleans Convention

the number to believe that this evil is not to be overcome."³ "The wicked and insane meddling of the enemies of our institutions," taken with other parts of his speech, indicates disgust at the extreme attitude of individuals rather than a feeling of general hostility toward the northern section.

Neither can one contend that the Baltimore Convention which met in 1852 showed a sectional spirit which was objectionable. The address of Brantz Mayer in welcoming the delegates to Baltimore does take on a tone of resentment against certain prosperous northern cities: "We are disposed—not in a sectional spirit—not with a desire to weaken the Union—to join you in freeing the American mind from that unmanly subservience—that colonial obedience—which is so rapidly making us dependent on the North. The northern capitals feel the danger of this fact, for they do all they can to encourage the absorbing metropolitan sentiment, and to fix the vassalage of the South and West by that commercial lien of extravagance and debt which may ruin sections as it has often ruined individuals. Steam and electricity are rapidly consolidating us; yet New York and Boston ignore the existence of any commercial capitals but themselves, while their presses diffuse information as to their own allurements alone, and rarely mention a rival city save to disparage its worth and exalt their own."⁴ The writer has made no investigation of the files of the northern press, but it is likely that a survey would bear out Mayer's statement. The tone of resentment which is here clearly discernible grew steadily in ever increasing volume in the next seven years until it culminated in the plainly disunion convention at Vicksburg.

The convention which met at Memphis in 1853 was also conservative in tone. Senator Dawson in the chair disclaimed any implication that he was a sectional man. He declared that at the Baltimore Convention (at which he had also presided): "We were actuated by no feelings of hostility to any section of the Union"; and referring to the meeting just opening he said: "We have met for no unjust, sectional, or unconstitutional pur-

³ *DeBow's Review*, p. 549.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XIV. 378.

pose, in opposition to no geographical interests, but to examine into plain and admitted rights. If any seeming sectional antagonism appear, the reply is, that we are members of one family, children of the same mother, only younger than their elders, and by one statute of distributions,—the Constitution of the United States,—entitled to the same rights, and to an equal share in our common heritage.”⁵

The Charleston Convention of 1854 was characterized by Thomas H. Benton as a “disunion convention”; and here for the first time the radical elements, which before had been muttering in an undertone, really broke loose. Mr. DeBow was not present, but he sent a letter which was very sectional in tone.⁶ Nelson Tift of Georgia⁷ offered a resolution providing for a committee “to report on the most simple, practical, and constitutional measures in the reach of the southern states, which would defend and secure their rights in the Union.”⁸ Albert Pike’s speech on the Pacific Railway was highly inflammatory,⁹ and the record states that his utterances were greeted with “great applause.”

The denunciation of Benton seems to have had a soothing effect upon the convention which met at New Orleans in 1855. The president disclaimed any thought of disunion, and his entire

⁵ *Ibid.*, XV. 257.

⁶ In part Mr. DeBow said: “It is difficult to resist the evidence that these conventions . . . have contributed largely to that great development which has been exhibited everywhere in the last eight years throughout the South, extending her railroads, enlarging and diversifying her commerce and manufactures, stimulating her agriculture, inviting and concentrating population, and fixing upon all minds the conviction growing each day stronger, than in these great yet long-neglected elements of power, more than in political agitation and party platforms, is the South to vindicate, if vindicate she does again, her right to an equal rank and position in the Union. . . . They have torn the veil from the eyes of the South, and brought her to see and feel . . . she has been . . . the willing vassal of other sections; reading, learning, or admiring only what may be found in their books, periodicals, and newspapers; in their schools and colleges; on the routes of their railroads; in their thriving cities; at their crowded watering places; which, to the exclusion of everything of the kind at home, she has fostered and supported. This, too, without reciprocity, and in face of the fact, that the power she was bolstering up, grown arrogant, has been pressing upon her rights and institutions and offering, through its ‘provisos,’ in forced exchange for inalienable birthrights, the merest mess of pottage.” *DeBow’s Review*, XVII. 95.

⁷ There was a judge of this name, but I am not sure that this is the same man.

⁸ *DeBow’s Review*, XVII. 98.

⁹ We have space for but one quotation, which is a fair sample of several pages of oratory: “If the government of the United States, in case of invasion, or disregard of our right by the republic (of Mexico) . . . would not interfere to protect the rights of her own citizens, there. . . . Then I, for one, will cease to be an American citizen, and you may raise your banner of secession, and I will be found fighting under it.” *Ibid.*, p. 399.

speech was quite in keeping with his claims.¹⁰ Pike, too, was more moderate in his utterances, although several passages were radical in tone. He particularly deplored the commercial dependence of his section on northern industry, and declared: "If we are to remain in this Union, we must continue to preserve that proud and lofty bearing of perfect independence and equality with which we came into it."¹¹

In his opening address to the convention at Richmond, General Tilghman deplored sectionalism and gave a tribute to his love of Union, although he hoped that "the feeling which may pervade the bosom of every one present will be that of ardent attachment to the southern portion of the confederacy."¹² But despite the ardent professions of "unionism" on the part of the chairman and others, there was a feeling of discontent plainly manifest in the resolutions.¹³

The committee which issued the call to the Savannah Convention took a strong sectional position. "It is impossible to resist the evidence that these conventions originating at first in purely economic considerations . . . have contributed largely to a consolidation of Southern sentiment. . . . It is too late to learn the lesson that commerce is as honorable as agriculture, and that it is as dishonorable to purchase the wares and commodities of an abolitionist, knowing him to be such, as it would be to give aid and countenance to the enemy during the pressure of actual war. In our intercourse with the North it at least becomes us to systematize our traffic, that it shall be

¹⁰ *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 356-7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 526. In the course of his remarks he said: "It is time that we should look about us, and see in what relations we stand to the North. From the rattle with which the nurse tickles the ear of the child born in the South to the shroud that covers the cold form of the dead, everything comes to us from the North. We rise from between sheets made in northern looms, and pillows of northern feathers to wash in basins made in the north, dry our beards on northern towels, and dress ourselves in garments woven in northern looms; we eat from northern plates and dishes; our rooms are swept with northern brooms, our gardens dug with northern spades, and our bread kneaded in trays or dishes of northern wood or tin, and the very wood that feeds our fires is cut with northern axes, helved with hickory brought from Connecticut and New York. And so we go on from the beginning to the end. We hardly put anything on or in ourselves that does not come from the north. It is high time that these things were changed." *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 524; *Charleston Courier*, January 17, 1855.

¹² *DeBow's Review*, XVIII. 524; *Charleston Courier*, January 17, 1855.

¹³ For example, "Resolved, That the Senators and Representatives from the Southern and Southwestern States be requested to vote for no law granting appropriations in aid of ocean mail lines terminating at a northern port, without the insertion of a clause binding the government to extend like aid to a line or lines that may hereafter be established between ports of the Southern States and foreign ports." *DeBow's Review*, XX. 350; *National Intelligencer*, February 5, 1856.

with those only, who are not in open and acknowledged hostility to our rights and institutions.

"Is it our purpose that (the social system and institutions of the South) shall remain intact amid the disorganizations which threaten other society? . . . They have raised us to ten millions of freemen, and enabled us to bring under Christian influences four millions of happy, well-protected and contented laborers, descendants of barbarians, thrown upon our shores by the hands of Providence, making use as instruments of Northern ships and Northern cupidity. . . . Reforms there may be—time and experience develop these in the machinery of all societies. Should such at any time be necessary at the South, it is ours and ours only, in assemblies and conventions, to pronounce upon them, indignantly repelling the impudent interference of our neighbors.

"With institutions of learning like those that have been long established and now flourish in the states of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi must the youth of the South be longer doomed to exile in uncongenial climes, where the most sacred associations of their homes are denounced as those of the savage and the barbarian, the heritage of guilt and crime, and where grave and Reverent professors and clergymen leave the pulpit and the desk to sign and circulate incendiary political addresses, substituting rifles for Euclid or the Bible, and finding in Kansas fields more classic and consecrated than were ever before furnished to them by Attica or Palestine. . . . Can the making of (our school books) be entrusted so exclusively to those, who by instilling an occasional heresy, dangerous to our repose, imagine that they serve at the same time God and mammon—their consciences and their pockets?"¹⁴

In his inaugural address at Savannah, President Lyon said: "The day may come—we do not attempt to disguise it, for to do so were more than folly—when the South may find that she will be driven to the necessity of exerting, and will have need and occasion for, all her powers to preserve her rights and honor."¹⁵ A. P. Calhoun, commenting on an incendiary speech

¹⁴ *DeBow's Review*, XXI. 551.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXII. 87.

of Mr. Bethune of Georgia, said that the South "was first robbed by an unequal system of taxation, and taunted by the North for her want of prosperity. The South pays forty million dollars yearly as a tribute to the Union. He thought we should meet the issues presented by Mr. Bethune boldly, and at once."¹⁶ Albert Pike also gave an exhibition of radicalism.¹⁷

The call to the convention at Knoxville contains this significant statement: "Every purpose is of trifling importance in comparison with the high moral and social objects of the Convention. They are intended to spread far and wide, correct, enlarged, and faithful views of our rights and obligations, and to unite us together by the most sacred bonds to maintain them inviolate for ourselves and our posterity."¹⁸ It was at Knoxville that W. G. Brownlow of Tennessee shouted amid laughter and applause: "We can outspoke them (the North), and out-write them, and if necessary we can out whip them. He was for fighting them in the Union, not out of the Union. He was for holding on to the purse strings of the government, the navy, and the standing army, and when the time comes for the South to unite as one man, he would know no division, no Whig, no Democrat, no Know Nothing. And when driven to the wall he was for uniting together against their adversaries, and giving them the d—— and rubbing it in."¹⁹ W. C. Flournoy of Virginia stated that "he hated the North for stealing the negroes of the South, and then lying about it afterwards and he hated everybody who did not hate them."²⁰ Hon. W. W. Boyce of South Carolina thought "disunion inevitable, and therefore he did not desire to throw a firebrand into the South to weaken her strength (by discussion of the slave trade)."²¹

¹⁶ *Charleston Courier*, December 11, 1856.

¹⁷ One speech is thus summarized: "Unless some such steps were taken to unite the South, to strengthen her and make her independent of the North, the days of this Union were numbered. . . . He was not for dissolving the Union, though he believed the South had a right to do so, and if it was to be settled, that the Fugitive Slave compact was to be virtually null and void, that would warrant the South in doing so. . . . In the meantime, let the South strengthen their defences, develop their resources, increase their prosperity and forget the intestine feuds and struggles. . . . We are in the Union now. He trusted we should ever remain in it. But let us act as if, while we may remain in it forever, we may be soon compelled to act out of the Union, and then we shall have nothing with which to blame ourselves." *DeBow's Review*, XXII. 311-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 193.

¹⁹ *Tri-Weekly Carolina Times*, August 15, 1857.

²⁰ *National Intelligencer*, August 22, 1857.

²¹ *Ibid.*

The committee which issued the call for the Montgomery Convention began its address by stating that it was probable that the South "shall at no distant day be compelled to assert its political independence. . . . There is not only little ground to hope for the preservation of (the Union), upon the basis and under the guarantees of the Constitution of 1787, but there is most imminent danger of its entire destruction before many years shall have rolled by. . . . (If we can regain our lost commerce) the Southern States will then be prepared more fully to meet the issue thus forced upon them, and able to defend as well as justify their position, when they shall be compelled to 'assume among the powers of earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them.' "22

In his address of welcome at Montgomery, William Lowndes Yancey, one of the leading southern statesmen, said: "I must be allowed . . . to welcome you, too, as but the foreshadowing of that far more important body . . . that . . . must ere long, assemble upon Southern soil, for the purpose of devising some measures by which not only your industrial, but your social and your political relations shall be placed upon the basis of an independent sovereignty"; and the record tells us that this plain allusion to disunion was met with "renewed applause."²³ Mr. A. P. Calhoun, the president of the Montgomery Convention, expressed himself in this extraordinary manner: "If we permit the power from the North to go farther than it has already done . . . it would be utterly idle for us to expect, that one jot of power obtained by our foe would ever be yielded. . . . Time, gentlemen, to us is valuable. Let a common interest unite us; let us . . . develop every atom of strength."²⁴ Yancey made an eloquent speech in which he declared: "He would shed his blood to save the Union as our fathers left it, but not the Union which had been reared upon its ruins. The Union of our forefathers has already been dissolved by oppression and fraud, and there was no drop of blood in his heart that he was not ready to shed in

²² *DeBow's Review*, XXIV. 424-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 574.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

defense of Southern rights against that Union.”²⁵ During another portion of the debate Roger Pryor of Virginia stated: “Should a Black Republican President be installed in the executive chair in Washington, and the power of that government be palpably in his hands, . . . then he was willing to make the issue, and he could pledge Virginia not to be behind Alabama.”²⁶ The convention even went so far as to discuss the resolution of Mr. Jones of Georgia: “That we recommend to the governors of the Southern States, or such of them as think with us, to call on the people of their respective States to elect delegates, equal to their representation in Congress, to meet in convention at . . . on the first Monday in . . . to take into consideration the present critical position of the South, and the dangers that threaten her in the future, and to endeavor, if possible, effectual safeguards for her future security and equality in the Union; or, failing in that to go out of it.”²⁷

The Vicksburg Convention was the most radical of the entire series. Were we to examine all of the disunion sentiments uttered there, we should have to reproduce nearly the entire proceedings. We shall content ourselves with only two exhibits.

The first is taken from the lips of Mr. L. W. Spratt, chairman of the committee which was appointed to consider the reopening of the African slave trade. In the course of his speech Mr. Spratt said: “It may be said the trade cannot be legalized within the Union. It may be so, but the people of the South have higher trusts than simply to preserve this Union. We have rights, and liberties, and institutions, marked by every indication of divine approval, and it is not for us to shrink from the assertion of these trusts in blind devotion to the perpetuity of any merely human instrument; and if, therefore, the question surely comes, whether we shall follow our fortunes, or forego them in deference to this Union, to honest men there

²⁵ *DeBow's Review*, p. 584. At another time Yancey asked: “Are you ready, countrymen? Is your courage up to the highest point? Have you prepared yourselves to enter upon the great field of self-denial as your fathers did, and undergo, if necessary, another seven years war, in order that you and your posterity may enjoy the blessings of liberty? If you are, I am with you; if you are not, I am not with you.” Again the record states: “The gentleman concluded amid loud and continued applause.” *DeBow's Review*, XXIV, 588.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 588.

can be no option but to follow them. . . . If this government, in the madness which precedes its dissolution, shall send its agents to enforce the law—if they shall search our homes and seize our citizens for acts we recognize as right, the tea again falls overboard, the powder is seized again in Charleston harbor, and as sure as the sun shall rise, it will rise upon the reeking plains of a southern Lexington and Concord.”²⁸ Governor Foote of Mississippi pronounced these to be treasonable sentiments,²⁹ and it seems to us that he was not greatly in error.

Governor John J. McRae of Mississippi was unable to attend the Vicksburg Convention, but he sent the following communication:

“*Resolved*, That the success of the Republican party in the election of a President of the United States by a sectional majority in 1860 . . . will be a virtual dissolution of the compact of the existing Union of the States, and in that event this Convention recommends to the people of the slaveholding States to meet immediately to determine the mode and measure of upholding the constitutional Government as it at present exists, by preventing the installation into office, or failing in that, to resolve the slaveholding States into a separate, independent organization, with such constitutional form of Government as will best secure their safety, their honor, their rights and institutions, and make them a power of the earth.”³⁰

What effect did these inflammatory opinions have outside the convention? The men who attended these meetings were leaders of a type of thought. When they returned to their homes they repeated the things which they had heard, thus scattering the propaganda among their neighbors. In this way the convention was of vast importance in the formation of southern sentiment.

“We are in earnest in this ‘Southern reform,’” said C. G. Baylor in the *National Intelligencer*, “we are in earnest in regard to the education of our youth at home; and Northern institutions of learning will feel that we are. We are in earnest in regard to aiding individually, and by community of senti-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 212.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

ment, the publishing of school books and works for religious instruction, under Southern supervision. We are in earnest in regard to giving the press such a position, by the contribution of wealth and talent, as to show the world that the South is not yet in a state of mental subjection. We are in earnest in all our railroad projects, as the actual subscription by county tax in every state shows. The planters are in earnest about direct shipments, and they will use their influence to encourage those houses at the South, embracing direct trade as a just commercial policy. . . . *The movement will go on.* It cannot be retarded.”³¹

“They were links in a strong and enduring chain,” said the *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* in speaking of the conventions, “which is destined to bind the South and great Southwest in a unity of interests, sentiments and action, that will finally laugh to scorn the assailants of our Southern institutions. Let our readers mark it, the annual recurrence of such a gathering of the ablest and wisest men of the Southern States, men representing every interest—statesmen, merchants, manufacturers, planters, and others from every walk of life—will do more for the progress and ultimate independence of their section than all the political conventions which have yet been held. The complete union, and it will be a strong one, of the planting States, is as sure to follow these periodical assemblages of Southern citizens, as effect does cause.”³²

But although the conventions were successful in the formation of sectional sentiment, they failed to achieve their immediate objects. The causes are not hard to find and to this we shall briefly devote ourselves.

In the first place, the conventions were not well organized.³³ With the exception of the Baltimore Convention, they were practically mass meetings. Delegates were appointed by governors, city councils, mayors, boards of trade, and citizen meetings; but there is no evidence that these delegates represented public sentiment; nor were all sections of the South, or even

³¹ *National Intelligencer*, June 10, 1853.

³² *Tri-Weekly South Carolinian*, April 18, 1854.

³³ I am indebted for some of the ideas of this and the following pages to Mr. Russel's work. Cf. p. 145 ff.

of a given state, represented. While it was necessary for every representative at the convention to represent some constituency, it was easy for anyone who wished to attend to secure credentials as a delegate.

In the second place, the conventions were not well managed. No programs were made out in advance, and no effort was made to have subjects discussed by those persons best qualified to speak on them. Debate was usually unlimited. Thus able and fluent orators like Pike and Spratt could monopolize the time of the convention to the exclusion of more practical men. At the Memphis Convention of 1853 the committee on resolutions met for the purpose of deciding what subjects were to be brought before the convention and it was found that no delegation had anything to offer except the representative from Maryland, who "thought the subject of direct trade was very important."

In the third place, the conventions were not practical. They put great faith in resolutions. "For a quarter of a century," said the *New York Tribune*, "she (the South) has been holding conventions, at which it has been resolved that Norfolk, Charleston, and Savannah should become great commercial cities, which obstinately they refuse to be."³⁴ Even southern newspapers sensed this situation and did not hesitate to express it. "Let them determine to run packets from one or more southern ports," said the *Richmond Enquirer*, "and, to obtain the requisite funds to build and equip these vessels. Let them open books of subscription in every Southern State. They may accomplish their purpose by this means, but they never will by adopting resolutions and making long speeches about the importance of direct trade."³⁵ A few years later this sheet turned the convention movement into ridicule,³⁶ and the *National*

³⁴ *New York Tribune*, quoted in *Charleston Courier*, April 24, 1854.

³⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, April 4, 1854.

³⁶ "The enthusiast from Mississippi, when he has let off a notable plan for converting cotton seed into cheese, listens complacently to the gentleman from Kentucky who proposes manufacturing silk from the refuse of the hemp stalk. The Western speculator who makes a speech in favor of employing the Crows, Blackfeet, and Sacs to construct a railroad out of old tomahawks and to issue wampum as a substitute for the ordinary railroad stock, is not the man to object to the gentleman from Virginia, who proposes running a daily line of flat-boats to the Arctic Ocean to supply Massachusetts with ice and Polar bear meat." *National Intelligencer*, August 3, 1857, quoting *Richmond Enquirer*.

Intelligencer suggested that the conventions were only "a pleasant reunion of Southern gentlemen."³⁷

Committees were often appointed to investigate and report or to memorialize Congress or state legislatures. Almost without exception they failed to perform the tasks assigned. At Memphis such a committee was appointed to publish and distribute, especially in Europe, a full report of the facilities offered by the South and West for the manufacture of cotton.³⁸ There is no record of such a report. The Charleston Convention appointed a committee to gather statistics on mining, manufacturing, lumbering, milling, internal improvements, and capacities for trade and commerce in the South.³⁹ To facilitate its work, it was divided into five subcommittees. The chairmen of the subcommittees had no report ready, and the chairman of the main committee transmitted certain documents and a letter.⁴⁰ It was this failure of the convention to take its own work seriously that convinced practical men that there was nothing to be hoped from it.

In the earlier meetings an honest attempt was made to keep politics out of the proceedings. At Memphis a political debate over federal aid for internal improvements was narrowly averted,⁴¹ and the strict constructionists, led by John A. Quitman, compelled the omission from the resolutions on the Pacific Railroad of a clause calling upon the national government to construct the main trunk.⁴² The same question came up at Charleston.⁴³ This time a majority were in favor of federal aid, but Governor Chapman of Alabama declared that if the resolution were passed in that form the next convention would see but few delegates from Alabama; and the obnoxious proposal was withdrawn.⁴⁴ It is unfortunate that later conventions did not follow these wise precedents, for when Cuba, Kansas, and the slave trade began to be discussed the sessions were soon dominated by disunionists.

³⁷ *National Intelligencer*, August 3, 1857.

³⁸ *DeBow's Review*, XV. 268, 432.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XVI. 635; XVII. 325.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XVIII. 357.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, XV. 265.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 265 ff; 270 f.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, XVII. 261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 400 ff.

The defenders of the convention movement attempted to shift the responsibility for its failure to accomplish practical results to Congress and the state legislatures who, they said, did not follow out its suggestions. But this argument begs the question, for the recommendations were generally indefinite and were not usually pressed with vigor. In the later conventions the leaders claimed that the real object of their movement was to unite the South, consolidate public opinion, and prepare the people for the crisis which was approaching. In achieving this purpose they were partially successful, and it is here that the real importance of the conventions must be found.



